





BOOK 2 OF THE COILING DRAGON SAGA

WO CHI XI HONG SHI (我吃西红柿)

TRANSLATED BY REN WOXING

DRAGONBLOOD

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WO CHI XI HONG SHI

*Translated by*

REN WOXING

[WUXIAWORLD LIMITED](#)

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# Prologue

Linley had finally brought the Baruch clan's most important heirloom, the warblade 'Slaughterer', back home. This had been the dream of countless Baruch ancestors before him as well as the dream of Hogg Baruch himself. Alas, what should've been the proudest moment in his life was shattered as he received news from Uncle Hillman of his father's death...

## **Part I**

# **The Road to Revenge**

# 1

## The Dusty Affairs of the Past

Hillman was being gripped so tightly by Linley's claws that his clothes were torn open. Scarlet blood slowly leaked out, staining his clothes red, but Hillman didn't notice in the slightest. Staring at Linley, he said in a downcast voice, "Linley, calm down first."

"Tell me." Linley was staring at Hillman.

Hillman said solemnly. "The troop of Knights following you is about to arrive. For now, let's not allow others to know about the affairs of your clan. Come with me first." Hillman shook his shoulders loose of Linley's claws, then grabbed Linley's scaled arms with the intention of pulling him into the ancestral halls... only to find that he was unable to budge Linley.

"Linley!" Hillman turned his head, a spark of anger in his eyes.

"Uncle Hillman, I know how to act." Linley's face was deeply sunken, but he took a deep breath, retracting the scales on his arms into his body and returning to normal. Just as he once more returned the warblade 'Slaughterer' to its case and held it, Linley could hear the sounds of hoofbeats outside drawing near.

The troops of Knights of the Radiant Temple had finally arrived. Linley turned, glancing at them coldly, but paid them no mind. He said directly to Hillman, "Uncle Hillman, lead the way."

"Alright." Seeing that Linley was able to calm down, Hillman felt a little bit better. He immediately led Linley in the direction of the ancestral hall. Linley's face remained sunken. At this moment, aside from Linley himself, perhaps nobody knew that beneath that calm expression there lay hidden an incredibly deep, painful wound.

Neither the Shadowmouse Bebe nor Doehring Cowart made a sound. They were connected to Linley's soul. Naturally, they could feel the unimaginable

grief and pain which Linley was currently suffering.

The wind rose, catching up and hurling into the air countless leaves which had been lying on the unimaginably ancient stone-tiled grounds. *Creaaaak*. Hillman pushed open the door to the ancestral hall, then turned to look back at Linley.

Holding the warblade 'Slaughterer', Linley stepped inside, his face calm. His gaze was fixed upon those rows of spirit tablets placed in the middle of the ancestral hall. Given Linley's current visual acuity, he could clearly read the words on the newest spirit tablet, located at the front.

There were only two words on the front: Hogg Baruch.

Linley felt his mind growing dizzy, as though he was hallucinating. He just stood there for a long moment without moving... and then, still carrying the warblade 'Slaughterer', Linley stepped forward to the stone platform in front of the spirit tablets. He placed the 'Slaughterer' on top of the platform.

Linley looked at the spirit tablet, a peaceful smile appearing on his face. In a soft voice, Linley said, "Father. I'm back."

"I know that all your life, your greatest desire was that we recover our ancestral heirloom and regain the bygone splendor of our clan, the Dragonblood Warrior clan." Linley spoke very carefully and softly, as though he were afraid of disturbing someone. His voice was so gentle and oh-so light.

Linley stared at the spirit tablet. "I didn't disappoint you. I have already brought back to the Baruch clan, to the Dragonblood Warrior clan, our ancestral heirloom, the warblade 'Slaughterer'. Very soon, I will restore our Dragonblood Warrior clan to glory. I will make sure the entire Yulan continent knows of the splendor of our Dragonblood Warrior clan, and will make sure everyone in the Yulan continent knows your name."

"All of this, I will accomplish. I so swear." Suddenly, a fiendish look appeared on Linley's face. "But of course, before I do all of these things... I will first avenge you."

There was no question at all in his mind that his father, Hogg Baruch, had been killed by someone. Given his father's prowess as a warrior of the sixth rank who had been in the prime of his health, there was no way he could've

died to a normal illness. What was more, if he had died of illness then Hillman wouldn't have acted so secretively. Linley's intuition was telling him that his father's death was no ordinary death!

"The person who caused you to die... I will make sure he dies as well!" Within Linley's eyes, once more there seemed to be a hint of that terrifying, dark golden color of the eyes of the Armored Razorback Wurm.

Linley turned to stare at Hillman fiercely. "Uncle Hillman, tell me. How did my father die, exactly? In addition, where was my father buried? Also, you said my father died three months ago. Why didn't you tell me?"

Hillman opened his mouth, but did not speak right away. A long moment passed. "Linley, calm down first," Hillman finally said slowly.

Calm down? How could he calm down?

"I wish so very much that my father could be here and personally see the 'Slaughterer' with his own eyes. I long to tell my father that I have become a Dragonblood Warrior. I deeply desire to see my father's smile, hear his gratified laughter, and see the pride on his face when I assume the Dragonform! However... all of this is now impossible." Linley felt as though his heart had been sliced by knives. Hillman was actually asking him to calm down?

Linley wanted to angrily shout at Hillman, but he restrained from doing so. Taking in a deep, unwilling breath, he swallowed his rage. Staring at Hillman, Linley said, "Uncle Hillman, tell me everything that happened. I want to know everything."

"Your father died three months ago. But before he died, his instructions to me were that only after you had the power of a warrior of the seventh rank could I tell you. Otherwise, I cannot tell you the circumstances surrounding his death," Hillman said solemnly.

"A warrior of the seventh rank?"

"Yes." Hillman nodded slightly. "This was the reason why I went to the Institute to look for you, but didn't inform you of your father's death or why he had died. Your father's dying wishes were that I was to not allow you to learn of his death, so that you could calmly focus on your studies."



Hillman looked at Linley. “Linley, it isn’t that I’m not willing to tell you. It’s that this was your father’s dying wish. I cannot go against it. Only once you become a warrior of the seventh rank would I be willing to tell you everything.”

Linley understood. *A warrior of the seventh rank, eh?* He withdrew a leather-wrapped book from his clothes and handed it to Hillman.

“What’s this?” Hillman looked at it with surprise.

“A magus’ proof of rank.” Linley’s face was calm. Every single magus, from the day he began to be evaluated, would be issued a certificate with his proof of rank. Each time he advanced a rank, there would be a record of it.

Hillman opened the book and saw that under the ‘wind-style’ and ‘earth-style’ entries, there were a total of seven stars. “Seventh rank... a seventh rank dual-element magus?” Hillman was stunned. He stared disbelievingly at Linley.

How old was Linley? Only seventeen years of age. What did a seventeen-year-old dual-element magus of the seventh rank represent? Hillman wasn’t too clear on the specifics, but he knew that in the Kingdom of Fenlai the most powerful magus present was a magus of the eighth rank... but that was an old man, well over a hundred years old.

Hillman remembered how, when he had joined the army, there had been a magus of the seventh rank who had arrived at the same time. He remembered the glory, the pomp of it all. And now, little Linley whom he had watched growing up, had become in the blink of an eye a dual-element magus of the seventh rank.

“This... is this real?” Hillman asked an extremely stupid question. Hillman knew very well that this certificate of rank definitely couldn’t be fake.

“Uncle Hillman. Now you can tell me what happened, right?” Linley stared at Hillman.

Hillman nodded, then headed for the private room behind the ancestral hall. A few moments later, he came out. Walking over to Linley, he withdrew an envelope from his clothes. Presenting it to Linley, he softly said, “This was written by your father right before he died. Once you read it, you will understand.”

His hands trembling, Linley reached out and accepted the envelope. There weren't any words on the envelope itself. He opened it up and withdrew the letter inside, which had two full pages of content.

"Linley: By the time you actually read this letter, I will most likely have died a long, long time ago."

"Towards you and Wharton, my heart is filled with boundless remorse, but there is no way for me to do right by you two any longer. I only hope that you two will be able to live for many years in peace, which is why I have instructed your Uncle Hillman to only provide this letter to you when you become a warrior of the seventh rank."

When he read this, Linley's heart felt sour. "Let me live for a long period of time in peace? I imagine Father never expected me to become a magus of the seventh rank so quickly. After all, it normally takes many years for one to advance from the sixth rank to the seventh rank."

"Linley, I have held a secret within my heart for many years. Your mother did not actually die when giving birth to Wharton."

These words from his father caused Linley's heart to shudder. Ever since he was a child, Linley had known that his mother had died when giving birth to Wharton. But apparently... that was a lie.

"That year, when your mother was pregnant with Wharton, both of us were filled with joy. But the medical facilities at the town of Wushan were simply too poor, so I went with your mother to Fenlai City, where your mother safely gave birth to Wharton. Little Wharton was very adorable, and both of us were overjoyed. Shortly after he was born, filled with joy, your mother and I took young Wharton to the Radiant Temple to pray for him to be blessed. That day, both your mother and I were extremely happy. Afterwards, we left the Radiant Temple and stayed overnight at a hotel in Fenlai City.

"That same night, a group of mysterious people came to the hotel and forcibly abducted your mother. Totally outnumbered, I was only able to protect young Wharton... but I did see that on the arm of one of the assailants, there was a red, spider-like birthmark."

As he read this, Linley himself felt as though he had been transported back to

that night, ten years ago. Under the combined attack of many assailants, unable to ward them all off, his father had only been able to protect Wharton and could only watch powerlessly as his wife was taken. He had been unable to save her.

“I know that this was definitely no an ordinary group of kidnappers. The weakest of them was a warrior of the fourth rank, while the strongest was even stronger than me. Fortunately, their target was only your mother. If they had come for me, I would’ve died long ago. Someone capable of mobilizing a squad such as this would definitely be a major figure in Fenlai City. I didn’t dare to go public about this affair. I took little Wharton back home and told everyone else that your mother had died in childbirth. Only your Uncle Hillman and Housekeeper Hiri knew this secret.”

Seeing this, Linley’s mind was filled with questions. So the strongest of the kidnappers was even stronger than his father, but they didn’t care about his him. Their focus was only about abducting his mother. But why was his mother worth their time to abduct?

“I couldn’t let you know about this. During these past ten or so years, I have kept this secret buried deep in my heart. I didn’t dare tell anyone... and I couldn’t even go by myself to investigate your mother’s whereabouts, or to find out if she was alive or dead, or who that group of people was. I didn’t dare.”

His father’s words caused Linley’s heart to feel so much pain that it clenched.

“I am the successor to the mantle of leadership for the clan of the Dragonblood Warriors. At the very least, I had to raise you until you were fully grown. I could not allow the Baruch lineage to come to an end in my hands. Year after year, I could only secretly endure... but every night, I found it difficult to fall asleep. The question of whether your mother was alive or dead has constantly tormented me. I have endured... I have endured for eleven years!

“Linley, you have made me incredibly proud. First, you became a student at the Ernst Institute, the number one magus institute in the Yulan continent. Then, you became one of the top geniuses there. I am filled with confidence towards your future accomplishment. What’s more, the density of dragonblood in little Wharton’s veins has reached the requisite level. I am extremely proud

of you both. For both of my sons to be so outstanding... I feel that I have done right by the ancestors of the Baruch clan! But despite all of this, I still did not dare to investigate your mother's whereabouts because Wharton needed a large amount of gold to sustain his costly studies.

"And so I have endured for eleven years. But when you came back from the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts and gave me that large sack of magicite crystals, I knew... finally, I could give up everything and go find out whether your mother is alive or not. Although no one has seen your mother in eleven years and there is probably an 80% to 90% chance that she is dead, I am unwilling to give up. Even if I die, I will avenge her."

Seeing this, Linley's hands began to tremble again. Linley finally understood now. In the past, because he had to support the burden of Wharton's tuition, his father didn't dare to risk his life in investigating his mother's whereabouts. But when he, Linley, had brought back that sack of magicite crystals worth eighty thousand gold coins, his father no longer had any burdens left.

"Finally able to go investigating, I altered my appearance and put on a disguise as I snuck into Fenlai City. I began investigating what happened that year. Unfortunately, too much time had passed. Knowing that one of the assailants had a red spider birthmark on his upper arm, I spent an entire year searching for such a man. Finally, I found that man with the red spider birthmark. Following up on this clue, I continued to investigate. Eventually... I found out who it was that had stood behind this group of assailants.

"These people had been directed to act by a member of the current royal clan of the Kingdom of Fenlai. And that person... was none other than the younger brother of the King of Fenlai: Duke Patterson!"

## The Decision

In the Yulan continent, only an Emperor of an Empire had the authority to give his siblings the title of 'Prince'. The status of a 'Prince' of an Empire was roughly equivalent to that of a 'King' in one of the kingdoms. At most, a King could confer the title of 'Duke' upon his siblings. That was the absolute maximum. Even the 'Grand Dukes' ruling over the duchies were in fact nothing more than Dukes as well. Empire. Kingdom. Duchy. The ranks progressively went down at each level.

Duke Patterson? The younger brother of the King of Fenlai? Linley knew that the Boleyn clan, the royal clan of the Kingdom of Fenlai, was an extremely powerful clan. Both of the Boleyn brothers were extremely powerful warriors. King Clayde was known as the pride of Fenlai, precisely because he was also a warrior of the ninth rank.

As for Patterson, although he couldn't match up to his older brother he was still a warrior of the seventh rank. He was definitely a very powerful figure. "Duke Patterson...?" Linley's heart was filled with a hint of a murderous intent, but he continued to read.

"Disguising myself as a servant, I snuck my way into Duke Patterson's manor. After experiencing countless dangers and using a few special tricks, I was able to kidnap the leader of that mysterious group, a warrior of the seventh rank. After I used some special interrogation methods, he finally confessed. He admitted that his actions were done at the direction of Duke Patterson. But according to what this man said, after they kidnapped your mother Lina, she was sent away under Duke Patterson's orders via a different troop. Clearly, there was another figure behind Duke Patterson controlling things.

"The disappearance of the warrior of the seventh rank aroused the suspicions of Duke Patterson, and I wasn't able to finish my interrogations. Although I had made ample preparations, over the course of killing several experts and fleeing

from Fenlai City I was heavily wounded. Even so, I managed to sneak back home. Aside from your Uncle Hillman, I didn't let anyone else know what had happened. I knew that my injuries were too severe and that I wouldn't have too much time left. That's why I ended up leaving this letter for you.

"Linley, I wasn't a good father. I've always been too cold and severe with you. I don't ask for your forgiveness; I only hope that you will be level-headed and rational. Now that you have the power of the seventh rank, you will most likely have the ability to do some investigating on your own. But you must be careful. Be careful. Be careful! Neither I nor your mother Lina wish for you to die because of us.

"Linley, I'll be leaving now. As of this day, you are the leader of our Baruch clan. I entrust the clan and everything in it to you.

"As I die, my last thoughts are of how dearly I desire to see the warblade 'Slaughterer' with my own two eyes. Alas, I know now that this was just a wild hope. Linley... work hard. The clan now depends on you and little Wharton. In your father's life, he was most proud of you and little Wharton. My two wonderful sons."

On the signature line, there was only a bloodstain.

Flames erupted from Linley's hands. *Hiss...* In the blink of an eye, this letter was burnt to ashes. Hillman, standing off to the side, looked at Linley. Linley had just burnt the last testament of his father to ashes. But Hillman wasn't angry; in fact, he secretly nodded in approval. Although this letter was a legacy, it also contained too many secrets. If it fell into the wrong hands, it would be catastrophic.

Linley turned his head to look at Hillman. "Uncle Hillman. I want to entrust you with something."

"Go ahead." Hillman looked at Linley. He had already made up his mind to assist Linley in getting vengeance.

Linley stretched his arms out, picking up the warblade 'Slaughterer', then turned to look at Hillman. "Uncle Hillman, the 'Slaughterer' is the ancestral heirloom of our Baruch clan. I hope that you can hand the 'Slaughterer' over to my little brother Wharton in the O'Brien Empire. I want you to personally

deliver it!”

“The O’Brien Empire? Then here...” Hillman was beginning to worry about Linley.

Linley said seriously, “Uncle Hillman, don’t be worried. As a dual-element magus of the seventh rank, even the Radiant Church holds me in extremely high regard. Even King Clayde, the ruler of Fenlai, was extremely courteous to me. My safety is not something you need to be concerned about.”

Hillman was just a warrior. He didn’t fully understand what being a seventeen-year-old dual-element magus of the seventh rank truly meant. In fact, he didn’t even know that Linley was now a high-status master sculptor approaching the level of Proulx and Hope Jensen. “If that’s the case, then...” Hillman frowned.

“After you hand this warblade, ‘Slaughterer’, over to my younger brother, assist Grandpa Hiri and stay by my younger brother’s side. Everything here, I can and will handle by myself.” Linley’s voice was deep, and it carried a hint of frost.

In the entire Holy Union, he was alone now. He had no family here anymore. What did he have to fear? Linley had already made up his mind to avenge his father as well as find out what had happened to his mother. Was his mother alive or dead? In the depths of his heart, Linley was still hoping that his mother was alive. Although the chances were beyond slim, Linley was not willing to give up.

“Stay in the O’Brien Empire?” Hillman fell silent for a moment. He had family here in the town of Wushan, after all. But for him, as a warrior of the sixth rank he would be able to make a living for himself anywhere in the world he went.

From within his clothes, Linley withdrew a single magiccrystal card and handed it to Hillman. “Uncle Hillman, you can take your entire family with you. In addition, take this magiccrystal card. This magiccrystal card has not been imprinted yet, and it holds a million gold coins within it. Take this magiccrystal card with you, all the way to the O’Brien Empire.”

“A million gold coins?” Hillman stared at Linley in astonishment. A million gold coins was an absolute fortune. When Hogg was still alive, he had to sell off his

clan's possessions just to earn a few thousand gold coins. Even if he sold off the entire ancestral home, he might not be able to come up with much more than a hundred thousand gold coins. But now, in the blink of an eye, Linley was handing over a magicrystal card with a million gold coins on it. "Linley, you... where did you get this money from?" Hillman had to ask.

"Uncle Hillman, you don't need to ask. In the future, you will know." Linley's heart, at this moment, was filled with grief and rage. He was in no mood to brag about his accomplishments as a sculptor.

Hillman nodded slightly. "Linley, wait a moment." Hillman once more ran into the private room, then came back out with an urn, handing it to Linley.

"Is this...?" Linley's gaze couldn't leave the urn. He seemed to have already guessed what this urn contained.

Hillman instructed, "Linley, these are your father's ashes. When your father died, we didn't dare to publicly announce his death. We didn't even dare to bury him. Our only choice was to place his cremated ashes within the private room as we awaited your return."

Linley accepted the cremation urn. It felt heavy. So very heavy.



\*

The desolate wind howled. Not too far from the town of Wushan, there was a cemetery filled with countless tombs. Now, a new and extremely lavish tombstone had just been erected. The short-haired Linley was quietly seated cross-legged in front of it.

Linley had spent a full night erecting this tombstone. Given Linley's current level of ability, carrying a few boulders was child's play. Since Linley had already reached the level of a master in sculpting, he was naturally able to carve the boulder into a lavishly beautiful tombstone.

The desolate wind continued to whistle and howl, but Linley just sat there quietly. "Linley." Hillman appeared in front of Linley, carrying the 'Slaughterer' on his back in its case.



Linley didn't open his eyes. He only said, "Uncle Hillman, I've entrusted the 'Slaughterer' to you. I entrust my younger brother, Wharton, to you and Grandpa Hiri as well. Be safe on your way there. I won't send you off."

Hillman looked at the back of Linley, still seated cross-legged. He took another look at the tombstone. Finally, he nodded and silently departed, taking the warblade 'Slaughterer' with him.

From this day forward, there was no one left within the ancient ancestral manor of the Baruch clan aside from Linley and the servants.

Suddenly... Linley opened his eyes. He stared at the tombstone. "Father. I swear to you that I will make them pay a heavy price." Linley rose to his feet, then immediately turned and left. The Shadowmouse, Bebe, still stood on Linley's shoulders, but he seemed to be afraid to make any noise at all.

"Lord Hogg has passed away? Bu-but..." The citizens of the town of Wushan were currently in mourning for Hogg's passing.

"What a wonderful nobleman he was. How could he die like this? Who knows what the future of the town of Wushan will be like now? All these years, Lord Hogg kept the tax rates extremely low. Sometimes, he would even have to pay out of pocket to the kingdom. Where will anyone possibly find another such wonderful noble?" All of the citizens of the town of Wushan remembered and were thankful for Hogg's benevolence.

Strips of white funeral cloths were hanging in front of the Baruch manor. Linley himself was dressed in a set of mourning clothes as well. He was silently kneeling in front of the memorial spirit tablet set up in front of the main hall. The little Shadowmouse, Bebe, was also kneeling next to Linley, not making a sound. It was as though he could feel the pain Linley was suffering.

Tradition called for seven days of ritual filial mourning after the death of a parent. He had come late, but it was now time for the first day of mourning.

"Master Linley, Lord Guillermo is still waiting for your return," the captain of that squad of Knights of the Radiant Church said softly by Linley's side.

Linley turned his head, glancing at him coldly. The captain couldn't help but feel his heart shudder. "Seven days of ritual filial mourning. Within these seven

days, I will not go meet with anyone,” Linley said coldly, and then he fell silent again.

The captain couldn't help but feel resigned. He could imagine what Linley was feeling right now. His father had just died. For his son to observe the ritual filial mourning rites was heaven's law and earth's principle; a matter of course. The captain immediately left the main hall, then instructed his subordinates to head to Fenlai City and report Linley's current situation to the Radiant Church.

“Young master Linley, don't be too heartbroken.” The citizens of the town of Wushan came through in a steady stream to kowtow in front of Hogg's memorial spirit tablet. All of them remembered the benevolence Hogg had shown when he was alive.

Linley didn't speak. He only bowed in thanks to every single visiting citizen.



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This news quickly reached the Radiant Church, but Cardinal Lampson and Cardinal Guillermo weren't too shocked. “Linley's father has passed away?” Guillermo nodded slightly. “No wonder we weren't able to find anything when I sent people to inquire about his father, back when he first became a dual-element magus of the seventh rank. So it was because he had already passed away.”

The Radiant Church had a total of five Cardinals. Linley's matters were mostly handled by Cardinal Guillermo and Cardinal Lampson. “Guillermo, let us quickly prepare some things, then go and pay our respects to Linley's father,” Lampson suggested. Guillermo nodded as well.

Actually, based on Hogg's own status, there was no way a Cardinal of the Radiant Church would go to pay their respects to him. But Hogg was Linley's father, after all, and Linley's future prospects were unlimited. He had already been designated as an important future cornerstone of the Radiant Church. “Alright. It's already dark now. Then... let's head off early in the morning, tomorrow.”

The Kingdom of Fenlai had also already designated Linley as a highly important figure. Once Hogg's death became openly known, the news of his death quickly reached the royal palace of Fenlai. The speed with which they received this news was only slightly slower than that of the Radiant Church.

"Linley's father died?" Clayde nodded to himself as well. When Linley had become a dual-element magus of the seventh rank, he too had sent people to inquire about Linley's father, and he had in fact even told Linley that his father had gone missing. As it turned out, Linley's father had passed away after all. "I'll go pay my respects tomorrow morning." Clayde came to the same decision.

Aside from Clayde, many of the most important people in Fenlai City received this news from the royal palace. Many of them venerated Master Linley, while others wanted to make friends with him. Every single one of them decided to go early next morning to that little backwater town of Wushan, to pay their respects to Linley's father.

While all of this was going on, Linley remained within his ancestral home in the town of Wushan, quietly observing the rites of mourning.

## Assembling at the Town

Late at night. Linley's bedroom.

The sound of muscles and bones rumbling could constantly be heard coming from Linley's body, while Linley's very skin was rising, then falling. Beads of sweat were pouring out of every single pore on Linley's body, but Linley's face was very calm and peaceful. He was currently training in accordance with the Secret Dragonblood Manual.

The first time Linley activated the dragonblood in his veins, he had been vaulted directly to becoming a warrior of the sixth rank. According to the records contained within the Secret Dragonblood Manual, the first time one trained would be when one's dragonblood reached the highest possible density, which is why the rate of improvement would be so fast.

The further down the road the training continued, the harder it would become. This was doubly true upon reaching the ninth rank. If one wished to break through to the Saint level, the amount of time that would be needed was probably more than all the other time spent combined.

"For now, the Radiant Church highly values me. Given my status as a master sculptor, my personal status has dramatically increased as well, but my own personal power isn't enough yet. Although they are courteous to me, that is primarily because of my potential. If I am to gain revenge, I need to become more powerful."

Linley knew full well that he currently didn't have enough power. After all, he couldn't afford to assume the Dragonform and transform into a Dragonblood Warrior when he wanted to kill someone.

Unless the situation was critical, Linley definitely did not want to enter the Dragonblood Warrior form. Once it was discovered that he could transform into a Dragonblood Warrior, things would become very dangerous for him. After all,

the fame of the Dragonblood Warriors was simply too great. Additionally, it was known to all that once a Dragonblood Warrior reached the Saint level, he would definitely be a peak-tier Saint-level combatant.

“Boss, you’re working too hard.” Lying on the bed, Bebe was watching Linley train. Doehring Cowart was also watching from the side. Doehring Cowart could clearly tell what sort of mental state Linley was in.

His father had suddenly died, and he had also found out that his mother hadn’t died in childbirth after all and had instead been abducted. These two pieces of news had suddenly descended upon Linley like twin hammers. This sort of mental blow was far more vicious than Alice’s change of heart.

Doehring Cowart could feel the boundless hatred and murderous desires in Linley’s heart. Doehring Cowart knew very well that if Linley didn’t find an outlet for that hatred, he could very well turn into a murderous demon.

“I hope that Linley will be able to get his vengeance quickly. Otherwise, if he remains in this state for too long, the changes to his heart will become greater and greater.” Doehring Cowart was beginning to worry.



\*

The next morning.

Many servants were preparing all sorts of edibles within the Baruch clan’s manor. As soon as Linley stepped out of his bedroom, he saw them bustling about.

“Linley, the people who are coming today are most likely important people. Is this how you intend to receive them?” Doehring Cowart appeared by Linley’s side.

Linley and Doehring Cowart had both guessed correctly. The important people of Fenlai City and of the Radiant Church had quickly received word of Linley’s father’s death. 80% to 90% of them had come to pay their respects to Linley’s father, so Linley would naturally have to receive them.

The materials that Linley had prepared could be considered not bad, but the

skill of the chefs was too poor. There were only two chefs in the entire town of Wushan whose cooking skills could be considered adequate.

“You are going to have these two chefs of this small town receive these major personages?” Doehring Cowart laughed.

“Let them taste some of the local dishes of my homeland. This is already courtesy enough.” After speaking, Linley immediately went to eat breakfast. After breakfast, Linley once more went to kneel in front of the memorial spirit tablet, observing the rites of filial mourning. By seven in the morning, hoofsteps could be heard from outside the Baruch clan’s manor as an extremely lavish carriage parked itself outside.

“Third Bro!” A familiar voice called out.

Still kneeling in the main hall, Linley turned his head and saw Yale, George, and Reynolds rush inside. Having suffered two heavy blows, Linley was currently feeling extremely depressed. But upon seeing those three bros whom he had grown up with at the Ernst Institute, a ghost of a smile finally appeared on Linley’s face.

Upon entering the main hall, Yale, George, and Reynolds all knelt down on prayer mats. “Third Bro, I got the news last night about your father’s passing. Overnight, I called over Second Bro and Fourth Bro to travel overnight along with me. I’m sure many nobles will be coming today, so I also brought along several chefs from Fenlai City to come as well,” Yale said in a soft voice.

“Thank you.” Linley could imagine how busy his three bros must have been in the past few hours. First recruiting chefs, then preparing the carriage transport. Most likely, Reynolds and George had hurried over to here directly from the Ernst Institute, meeting Yale on the road at night and then arriving here together.

“Third Bro, don’t be too heartbroken.” George gently patted Linley on the shoulders.

Reynolds was also by Linley’s side. “Linley. No matter what happens, you will always have us three bros. Never ever allow yourself to be struck down by anyone or anything. Remain strong.”

Linley looked at Reynolds, a slight smile appearing on his face. He felt very warm in his heart upon hearing Reynolds, normally the most mischievous of them all, saying such words. No matter when or what, he would always have these three bros.

“Thank you all.” Linley looked at Yale. “Boss Yale, I’d like to hand over the responsibilities of hosting these nobles to you. I have no experience in this area.”

Yale nodded. “Don’t worry. I’ve brought quite a number of people over. They will definitely do a good job of receiving your guests.”



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The quiet little town of Wushan was not quiet at all this day. Time after time, the citizens of the town of Wushan would gather together and discuss the nobles who had just passed by.

“That group in the morning had at least four horses, and that carriage was huge and magnificent. All of those brave knights, wow... I’ve never seen such an awesome looking troop of knights.” An old man sighed with praise as he stared at the troop stationed outside the Baruch clan’s manor.

The locals nearby also nodded in praise. In such an ordinary little town, how often would they have the chance to encounter a wealthy noble? That troop of knights which Linley had brought with him when he had returned, by itself, was already a source of endless discussion amongst the locals.

“What do you guys think? Has young master Linley also become a powerful nobleman in the outside world?” a woman guessed. “Two days ago, I saw Linley lead a powerful troop of knights on his return.”

The town of Wushan was filled with constant chatting and speculation. And then, in the middle of the day, around eleven or so... the earth began to shake again. All the denizens of the town of Wushan could feel that dense, orderly sound of galloping hoof steps. This time, the density of the hoof steps was far heavier than when Yale came.

An extremely powerful mounted unit galloped past first, dressed in beautiful gleaming armor. Behind them were two extremely lavish carriages which were being pulled by four handsome stallions. The people driving the carriages were all extremely powerful-looking warriors. Behind these two carriages were a series of carriages filled with gifts, also under escort by a unit of knights.

All of the citizens of the town of Wushan craned their necks to watch. The majestic aura of the ace regiment of Knights of the Radiant Church charging through made all of the citizens feel as though a mountain was pressing down upon them. All of the citizens felt their hearts trembling, and the beautiful, lavish carriages all gleamed so much it made them squint their eyes. “Who are these people?” The citizens of the town of Wushan were filled with awe.

This carriage procession finally came to a halt in front of the Baruch clan’s manor, where there were many people who were prepared to station and stable these horses and carriages.

“Lord Cardinals Guillermo and Lampson, have arrived!” A loud, high-pitched voice rang out from within the Baruch clan’s manor, causing a huge commotion amongst the denizens of the town of Wushan. It was actually two Cardinals!

In the eyes of the citizens of the Holy Union, the Cardinals of the Radiant Church were all lofty figures. In their hearts, the Cardinals were like the stars in the night sky, beautiful to behold, but untouchable. But today, two Cardinals of the Radiant Church had actually come to the town of Wushan.

*Clatter! Clatter! Clatter!* Hoof steps could be heard yet again. Shortly after the troop with the Cardinals had entered the town, another very similar troop arrived with carriages that seemed even more lavish, with beautiful female maids and palace servants with skin as white as any maiden’s.

The carriage was golden and extremely extravagant, while the mighty knights were exhibiting their top-notch riding skills. The hoof steps were so much in lockstep, they sounded like a single great drumbeat, shaking the hearts of the citizens of the town of Wushan.

The denizens of the town of Wushan were stupefied. “Who... who are these people?” Many denizens hadn’t seen a procession in their entire lives.

When this new troop arrived outside the Baruch clan’s manor, that voice once



more rang out from within the manor. “His Majesty, King Clayde of Fenlai has arrived!”

“His Majesty the King!” All of the citizens of the town looked at each other. To the citizens of a kingdom, the king of a kingdom was the brilliant sun shining in the sky, with power over life and death. And now his Majesty the King, who should have been in his palace, had actually come to the tiny little town of Wushan.

The nonstop clatter of hoof steps didn’t abate. One troop of soldiers came after another. One carriage after another pulled up in front of the Baruch clan’s manor.

“Duke Bonalt of the Kingdom of Fenlai has arrived!”

“Marquis Jebbs of the Kingdom of Fenlai has arrived!”

“Count Juneau of the Kingdom of Fenlai has arrived!”

“Miss Delia of the Leon clan of the Yulan Empire has arrived!”

“Lord Bernard of the Debs clan of the Kingdom of Fenlai has arrived!”

That high-pitched voice rang out again and again, causing the citizens of the town of Wushan to feel totally speechless. What was going on? Why were so many members of the upper class congregating here at the town of Wushan? The citizens of the town of Wushan could guess the reason. The only major event which had occurred at the town of Wushan was Hogg’s death.

But... Hogg was just the noble of a minor town. Could his passing really cause his Majesty the King as well as two Cardinals of the Radiant Church to come? These citizens couldn’t help but think back to the triumphant image from a few days ago of Linley returning with a troop of knights at his back.

“All of this must have something to do with young master Linley.” Although these common citizens didn’t know the specifics of Linley’s situation, they were able to guess.



Within the Baruch clan's main hall. Linley was still kneeling on one side. The Cardinals, the King, the Dukes, the Marquises, the Counts, all either bowed or knelt down with sincerity, paying their respects to the dead.

Although the likes of Cardinal Guillermo only bowed, the only people they ever even bowed to were tremendously important figures. Now today, they were bowing to the departed Hogg.

"Linley, don't be too heartbroken," Guillermo said softly by Linley's side.

"Thank you." Linley bowed fractionally.

"Linley, your father's passing truly fills us all with regret." King Clayde also comforted Linley.

After a while.

"Linley, don't be too heartbroken." A clear voice rang out. Raising his head, Linley saw that Delia, dressed in simple clothes, was there as well, her face filled with concern.

"Thank you," Linley said in a soft voice. Delia nodded fractionally before being led away by servants as well. One noble after another came in to pay their respects to Linley's father. Even that Bernard, leader of the Debs clan, had come to pay his respects.

"Master Linley, don't be too heartbroken," Bernard said courteously.

Linley responded with the same courteous thanks. "Thank you."



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"Duke Patterson of the Kingdom of Fenlai has arrived!" Suddenly, the announcing voice once more rang out from outside.

Linley frowned very slightly. His father's death was linked to Duke Patterson, but Linley knew that his father had disguised himself before entering Duke Patterson's manor. Most likely, Duke Patterson had no idea that Linley's father was the person who had succumbed to the severe injuries caused by his subordinates.

Patterson looked extremely similar to Clayde. Both of them had long, golden hair, with eyes that seemed hawk-like. His waist was straight as a ramrod, and he had the aura of a noble.

Entering the main hall, Patterson bowed respectfully in front of Hogg's memorial spirit tablet.

"Master Linley, don't be too heartbroken," Patterson walked over to Linley and said with sincerity.

Linley raised his head and glanced at Patterson. Seeing the sincere look on Patterson's face, he still responded with the same level of courtesy: "Thank you." From the surface, one couldn't tell that Linley's treatment of Patterson was any different from his treatment of anyone else.

## A Nighttime Chat

“Patterson!” Linley silently murmured this name to himself. His mother had been taken away by Patterson’s men eleven years ago. Now, his father had been injured and killed by Patterson’s men over the course of his investigating his mother’s whereabouts.

The murderous intent in Linley’s heart was hidden, like the lava in the bottom of a primed volcano. But one day, it would erupt.

“Boss, let me kill this Patterson for you,” kneeling next to Linley, the little Shadowmouse spoke mentally.

“Don’t move,” Linley shouted back mentally. He remained kneeling inside the main hall, while one noble after another came inside, paying their respects to Linley’s father.



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There was a banquet that night, but Linley didn’t attend for a single moment. He remained kneeling inside the hall, observing the rites of filial mourning. Many of the nobles eventually left the town of Wushan late in the afternoon, hurrying back to Fenlai City. But there was still a number who remained behind at the town of Wushan.

For example, Cardinal Guillermo.

For example, Delia.



\*

Ritual filial mourning had to last for seven days. That night, Linley ate some

random food, then returned to his bedroom and prepared to begin his training.

“Linley, do you plan to take revenge for your father?” The white-robed Doehring Cowart appeared by his side.

Linley glanced at Doehring Cowart. “Grandpa Doehring, I absolutely *must* take vengeance for the death of my father. Aside from that... although I know that it was Duke Patterson who sent people to pursue and kill my father, I also need to investigate what happened to my mother. I need to find out if she is alive or dead.”

Killing Patterson was easy. Killing him in a way that would prevent anyone from finding out was much harder. After all, after killing Patterson, Linley needed to continue searching for his mother.

Doehring Cowart nodded slightly. “These are your personal affairs. You decide how to handle them. However, I hope you won’t act rashly. After all, you are still too weak when compared to real top-tier combatants. Even Patterson alone will be hard to handle. You aren’t a match for the combined might of all of his soldiers.”

Linley nodded slightly. Patterson was the younger brother of Clayde. How could he not have a large number of subordinates?

“I expect within a year or so, I should be able to reach the seventh rank as a warrior. I can’t waste any more time.” Linley sat cross-legged on the ground. The dragonblood battle-qi in his body once more began to circulate throughout his entire body, and all of his muscles and bones began to tremble.

Linley could feel his muscles and his bones slowly rise in power, as the tiny dragonblood cells also began to merge with his muscles and bones, raising their durability and toughness. When one first began to train in accordance with the Secret Dragonblood Manual, the pace of improvement would be very fast.

In this training state, Linley didn’t notice the passage of time at all. At roughly around eleven at night. Knock! Knock! Knock! The sound of knocking on the door. At the same time, a familiar voice called out. “Linley. It’s Delia. Can I come in?”

Linley was startled. “Whew.” Linley let out a deep breath. All of his trembling

muscles returned to normal, and the dragonblood battle-qi in his body was once more retracted to his dantian region. Linley looked towards the direction of the door. In his mind, he couldn't help but wonder. *It's late. Why has Delia come to speak with me ?* But he verbally responded, "Come in."

Pushing the door open, Delia stepped inside. Upon seeing Delia, Linley's eyes couldn't help but brighten. At this moment, Delia's golden hair was bound in a simple way. Those few tassels hanging down made her light purple dress seem all the more graceful. Linley had to admit... Delia was a very mesmerizing person. Delia had an aura of nobleness which Alice couldn't match. She was in the primary line of descent for the Yulan Empire's Leon clan, after all.

"Linley, are you okay?" Delia asked in a gentle voice as she walked over to Linley's bed and sat down. She stared at Linley with concern.

Linley couldn't help but feel warmth in his heart. Smiling, he said, "I'm fine."

Delia nodded. "In Fenlai City, I heard about your father's passing. I was a little worried. But... you really are as resilient as I've always felt you are."

"Thank you." Linley continued, "Delia, it's very late. Is there something you wanted to discuss?"

*You idiot.* Next to him, Doehring Cowart was secretly cursing at Linley. *A beautiful girl comes over this late at night to talk with you and comfort you, and you actually ask her what she wants?*

Delia laughed, slightly nervously. But then, she regained her usual calmness. "What, I can't come over to chat with you unless I want something? I've known you since our very first year together at the Ernst Institute. Since when did you decide to keep me at such a distance?"

"N-no, that's not what I meant," Linley said hurriedly.

Delia couldn't help but laugh in delight, but then she let out a long sigh. "Linley, there really is something I want to talk to you about, which is why I came over at such a late hour."

"Go ahead." Linley couldn't help but begin mentally guessing at what Delia was going to say.

Delia said helplessly, “Linley, you should know that this is year 9999 of the Yulan calendar. In eight more months, it will be year 10000 of the Yulan calendar. The first day of each year, the entire Yulan continent celebrates the Yulan Festival. You can imagine how important an event the celebration of the 10000th Yulan Festival will be.”

Linley nodded, not quite understanding why Delia was saying these things.

“Although the entire Yulan continent holds the Yulan festival in high importance, our Yulan Empire holds it in even higher esteem,” Delia continued.

This, Linley understood. After all, the first year of the Yulan calendar was the year when the Yulan Empire had unified the continent. The 10000th Yulan Festival would naturally be an extremely important day within the Yulan Empire.

“My clan has sent out an order. For this Yulan Festival, I must return home. For this Yulan Festival, our Yulan Empire will carry out an empire-wide celebration. Naturally, we main-branch descendants of the Leon clan must return to participate.” Delia looked at Linley. “Linley, the Yulan Empire is very far away from the Holy Alliance. This round trip will most likely take one or two years. Tomorrow, I’ll have to leave and return to my motherland.”

Linley understood Delia’s meaning. In other words, within this next year or so, he probably wouldn’t have a chance to meet with Delia again.

Staring at Linley, Delia bit her lips, then suddenly said, “Linley. Before I leave, can I hug you?”

“Hug?” Linley was stunned. He stared at Delia. He knew very well how Delia felt towards him, but... perhaps because the two of them had interacted too often, Linley had always viewed Delia as nothing more than a close female confidante, ever since the first year they studied together at the Ernst Institute. And especially after that affair with Alice, Linley’s heart had been frozen and locked.

Seeing the look in Delia’s eyes, Linley nodded. A smile appeared on Delia’s face, and she immediately reached out with her arms, embracing Linley by the neck, then pulled herself firmly against Linley’s body. Delia pressed her face gently against Linley’s face as well.

Linley could feel their mutual breaths. He could also smell the enchanting fragrance on Delia's body. In particular, when their faces touched, he could feel the warmth of her skin... all of this caused Linley to feel a very unique sensation.

"Linley. Thank you," Delia murmured into Linley's ear. Linley didn't make a sound.

Releasing him, Delia slowly rose to her feet, her eyes still locked on Linley's. But halfway to her feet, Delia came to a halt. There were only two inches of distance between her eyes and Linley's.

Suddenly, Delia bent down. Her lips just so happened to land and brush against Linley's, causing Linley to be stunned. Delia didn't give Linley the chance to react, as she then quickly stood up. Taking one last look at Linley, she quickly ran out of Linley's bedroom.

"Boss! Did she just force a kiss on you?!?" From the opposite side of the blanket, Bebe popped his tiny head out, staring at Linley.

"You...! Go back to sleep!" Linley mentally shouted at Bebe. Bebe let out a few disgruntled squeaks before returning to the blanket. But Linley still stared at the closed door through which Delia had left. His nose still seemed to be filled with the fragrant aura of Delia's perfume. His face seemed to still feel the warmth of Delia's face.

Rubbing his lips, Linley felt a soft, warm feeling in his heart. The feeling was very similar to the feeling he had that night, when he had hidden with Alice on her balcony and talked the night away.

"Delia..." Shaking his head, Linley cast away all of these extraneous thoughts.

"Linley." Doehring Cowart looked at Linley with interest. "When you had just entered the Ernst Institute and saw this Delia girl for the first time, didn't I say to you, then and there, that this was a beauty in the making? I told you from the very beginning to chase after her. Feeling regretful yet?"

Linley frowned as he looked at Doehring Cowart. "Alright, I'll stop talking." With a twirl of his beard, Doehring Cowart transformed into a beam of light and retreated into the Coiling Dragon ring.

Linley didn't think about this anymore. Once more seating himself cross-



legged, he entered the meditative trance to distill his mageforce.

Early the next morning, Delia led the delegation from the Leon clan away from the town of Wushan, but Linley didn't send her off. He continued to kneel there in the main hall, maintaining his vigil and observing the rites of filial mourning.

In the blink of an eye, the seven days of filial mourning had passed. In the town of Wushan, aside from Linley's bros, there were only two other major personages remaining: Cardinal Lampson and Cardinal Guillermo.

As Cardinals of the Radiant Church, Lampson and Guillermo didn't have anything they had to attend to. After all, most small matters could be handled by their subordinates, making their lives very relaxed. These few days, they spent their time sightseeing around the town of Wushan while occasionally going into Wushan itself.

Morning. The citizens of the town of Wushan were all watching on each side of the street as the delegations from the Radiant Church and from the Dawson Conglomerate began to depart.

"Boss Yale, Second Bro, Fourth Bro. There's something I need to go discuss with Lord Guillermo's party," Linley told his bros, and then left the Dawson Conglomerate's carriage and entered the carriage of Lord Cardinal Guillermo.

Lampson was in the carriage as well. The two Cardinals and Linley shared this carriage, but this carriage had been specially designed for Cardinals of the Radiant Church. It was extremely spacious, with enough space for all three of them to lie down and sleep, if they so desired.

"Linley, you've made up your mind?" Guillermo smiled as he looked at Linley. Previously, Linley had told Guillermo that he needed to discuss the matter of joining the Radiant Church with his father. But now, his father had passed away. Naturally, there was no one else for Linley to discuss this with. By now, he should have an answer for them.

"Lord Guillermo, Lord Lampson. I am still young. I wish... to temporarily assist his Majesty, King Clayde. For now, I think it would be best that I not take up a formal position within the Radiant Church. If in the future, the Radiant Church has need of me, I can be enlisted into your service at any time," Linley said.

Both Guillermo and Lampson smiled. Serve King Clayde? Clayde was the ruler of the Kingdom of Fenlai, while the capital of Fenlai, was also the Holy Capital of the Holy Union. What's more, the ruler of Fenlai was under the direct authority of the Radiant Church. For Linley to serve King Clayde was the same thing as declaring his allegiance to the Radiant Church. "Very good." Lampson was the first to begin grinning. "Linley, this is an extremely wise decision."

But neither Lampson nor Guillermo knew that the reason Linley had come to this decision was because he wanted to investigate his mother's whereabouts. Only through inserting himself into the national affairs of the Kingdom of Fenlai would he have even more opportunities to deal with Duke Patterson in the future.

Guillermo laughed as well. "Then from this moment onwards, you can be considered a member of our Radiant Church. Oh, right. You don't have any incantations for earth and wind spells of the seventh, eighth, or ninth ranks, or any of the forbidden spells, right?"

"Correct." Linley nodded. "I was only able to develop the incantation for the Soaring Technique through analyzing magical theory."

Guillermo said with satisfaction, "The incantation for the Soaring Technique isn't that difficult, but it is still quite impressive that you were able to extrapolate it from the incantation of the Floating Technique. Linley, don't worry. Once we return to the Church, we will send people to deliver all the incantations for spells of the seventh rank and higher to you."

## Writ of Nobility

The Ernst Institute did not make high-level magical incantations of the seventh rank or higher publicly available. If you wanted to learn these higher rank spells, you would have to decide to join a faction.

“Thank you, Lord Guillermo, Lord Lampson,” Linley said gratefully. He couldn’t help but think back to the power of the higher ranked wind spells as described in the books he had read. The higher ranked the spell, the more terrifying its offensive potential, especially in the wind-style. Its offensive spells, in fact, could be considered supreme amongst all styles. The forbidden-level ‘Dimensional Edge’ spell or the ninth-ranked spell “Void Extermination” spell were good examples of why this was the case.

“Linley, how about this. When we return to Fenlai City, I will send someone to inform Clayde of your decision. Clayde will, in short order, confer a writ of nobility upon you and grant you a manor as well.” Guillermo smiled. Linley nodded in response.

“Linley.” The nearby Lampson patted Linley on the shoulders. “You don’t need to worry about any official matters for now. The only thing you need to do is train hard. I very much want to see our Radiant Church have yet another Saint-level combatant in our midst within fifty years.”

Fifty years? Linley was confident that within fifty years, he could become a Saint-level Dragonblood Warrior. But as for becoming a Saint-level Grand Magus in fifty years, the difficulty was too great. “Work hard.” Guillermo also patted Linley on his shoulders in a friendly way.

As the resplendent carriages made their way through the village roads, the nearby trees and lakes soon receded into the distance. In front and behind the carriages, there were rows of knights. Under this resplendent escort, they reached Fenlai City by lunchtime.

Fenlai City. Within the Debs clan's manor. "Alice, can you forgive me?" Kalan was holding Alice's hands, staring into her eyes. A look of helplessness was on Alice's face. She gently nodded. What else could she do?

"Rowling is about to arrive," Alice said softly. "I'm about to go back." Despite everything, as of right now Alice and Kalan still were not formally man and wife. Even if they got engaged, they still would not yet be husband and wife. Only after the formal ceremony would they become husband and wife. Before the wedding, Alice still had to observe the proprieties. Every day, she would go back to her own home.

"Rowling?" Kalan couldn't help but frown upon hearing this name. Rowling was Kalan's principal wife. Because of the fame of the sculpture, 'Awakening From the Dream', that female figure who was the inspiration for the sculpture had also been deeply imprinted into everyone's mind. Once Kalan formally announced his engagement, many people would be able to recognize Alice as that inspiration. In a very short period of time, the Debs family had already selected a principal wife for Kalan.

"Kalan." A happy voice rang out. A golden-haired girl, her hair in pleats, ran over to them happily. This girl looked extremely pure and innocent, yet still possessed the aura of nobility. Especially those large, liquid eyes; they made her seem all the more adorable.

"Rowling. You came." Kalan forced a smile on his face. Kalan had to admit that Rowling was a very adorable girl. Perhaps nobody would refuse to be together with Rowling. Only, in Kalan's heart, the one he truly loved really was Alice.

"Where's Uncle Bernard?" Rowling swept the area with her big eyes.

"Father went out to handle some affairs. I expect he'll be back soon," Kalan replied. Kalan knew exactly where his father had gone and what he was doing. Thanks to the pressure of the Dawson Conglomerate, the businesses of the Debs clan in the City of Fenlai had reached the brink of collapse. Every day, they were losing money. If they continued suffering such losses, they might be able to hold out for another year or half year, but as time went on, even their deep pockets would eventually run dry.

What's more, the clan couldn't just sit there and do nothing. After all, many of

the other clans in Fenlai City were eying them covetously and circling around them. Thus... his father, Bernard, had made a very dangerous decision. To engage in the illicit mining and smuggling of water jade.

Water jade was a type of extremely valuable gemstone. Generally, it was inlaid on top of magistaffs, and was very beneficial to water-style magi. In the Kingdom of Fenlai, there was a fairly large amount of water jade deposits, and the Kingdom of Fenlai had generated an astonishing amount of wealth through water jade mining.

Because water jade was so precious, there naturally were many people who tried to engage in water jade smuggling. But his Majesty, King Clayde, bitterly detested the smuggling of water jade. Every single merchant who had been discovered to be smuggling water jade, King Clayde had ordered to be put to death. But because the profit margin for the smuggling of water jade was simply too enormous, perhaps 500% to 600%, there were still always merchants who were willing to brave this risk.

In the past, there was no need for the Debs clan to take such a dangerous route. But now, things were different. Since all normal business paths had been sealed off by the Dawson Conglomerate, the only choice for the Debs clan was to smuggle!

“There shouldn’t be any problems,” Kalan said to himself. “The business partner which father has selected is the Minister of Finance for the Kingdom of Fenlai, the younger brother of his Majesty, Duke Patterson. With him as our partner, the chance of there being any problems should be fairly low.”

Patterson was the Minister of Finance for the entire Kingdom of Fenlai. Clayde naturally had selected the person he himself trusted the most to assume the weighty responsibility of being in charge of managing the finances of the entire kingdom.

“Uncle Bernard is back.” Rowling’s bright voice sounded out.

Kalan raised his head. Bernard, his face covered with smiles, walked through the door. Seeing Rowling, he laughed. “Rowling, you are here? Have you had dinner yet?”

“Not yet,” Rowling replied.

Bernard nodded. "Tonight, stay here and have dinner with your big brother Kalan. Oh, right, there's something I need to discuss with your big brother Kalan. Why don't you and Alice have a nice chat? Later, I'll have your big brother Kalan spend some time with you." As he spoke, Bernard flicked a glance at Kalan.

Kalan obediently followed by Bernard's side as the two entered a private room. Closing the stone door, they lit the lamps. "Father, what is it?" Kalan asked hurriedly.

A hint of satisfaction was on Bernard's face. "I've already completed my discussions with Duke Patterson. He's already agreed. But we will have to split the profits on this endeavor, fifty-fifty."

"Fifty-fifty?" Kalan stared. "Father, Duke Patterson is being too greedy. Our clan is carrying out the actual smuggling work and spending all of the upfront costs. We are even paying for the horses out of pocket. All he's doing is arranging some safe smuggling routes for us."

It wasn't that Kalan didn't understand the importance of these smuggling routes. But for this project, the Debs clan had invested a truly massive amount of money, while Duke Patterson didn't have to spend a single coin. All he had to do was to use some of his official powers, and he would earn a huge amount of money.

"Fifty-fifty is within our range of acceptability." Bernard laughed calmly. "Duke Patterson isn't just providing us with safe smuggling routes. More importantly, he's betraying his country and betraying his elder brother. If King Clayde found out he probably wouldn't show any mercy, even though Duke Patterson is his little brother."

Kalan nodded slightly. Their partner was a Duke and the Minister of Finance. With him taking on such enormous risks for the sake of arranging a safe smuggling route for their clan, it was fair for him to claim half of the profits.

Bernard and Kalan exited the secret room and returned to the living room, where Alice and Rowling were currently engaged in conversation. "Oh, right. Kalan. I just heard from Patterson that in three more days, his Majesty will personally confer a rank of nobility upon Linley in the royal palace," Bernard

instructed, "Prepare a gift for me. In a few days, I will give it to Linley." Kalan nodded.

Alice, who was chatting with Rowling not too far away, couldn't help but turn her head and glance at them. "Big brother Linley is being conferred a rank of nobility?" Alice murmured to herself.



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Within the royal palace of Fenlai City. Dozens of important ministers were lined up in orderly fashion in the court, while King Clayde was sitting up high, overlooking everyone below.

"Everyone. Today, I have something important to announce." The smile on Clayde's face was radiant, and he spoke in a bright voice. The major ministers who had received the news in advance all knew what King Clayde was going to say. Clayde glanced at an attendant by his side. Instantly, the attendant shouted in a loud voice, "Linley Baruch, enter the palace!"

His voice echoed in the palace. Shortly afterwards, Linley, dressed in black and gold magus robes, entered the palace. All of the nobles and ministers in the palace turned to look at him. "I pay my respects to his Majesty." Linley bowed as he spoke.

Clayde looked at Linley, and a smile appeared on his face like a flower blooming. "Linley, for you to be willing to labor on behalf of our kingdom is something I am extremely gratified about. I now confer upon you the title of Prime Court Magus, and also bequeath upon you the rank of Marquis."

"Does anyone have an objection?" Clayde swept the court with his gaze. All the nobles and ministers stared enviously at Linley, but none of them voiced any objections.

"Your servant thanks you, Majesty!"

Actually, per what Cardinal Guillermo of the Radiant Church had originally said, the Radiant Church was planning on immediately giving Linley the rank of Duke. Linley, however, had felt this would be too amazing and draw too much

attention to himself, especially given that he previously never had a rank of nobility. If he rose in rank too fast, that wouldn't necessarily be a good thing. That was why they decided to go a step lower and confer the rank of Marquis.

“Linley, as the Prime Court Magus and as a Marquis, you naturally can no longer reside as a mere guest of the Dawson Conglomerate. I have already arranged for an extremely peaceful and secluded estate to be granted to you. It is on Greenleaf Road, not too far from the palace,” Clayde said with a smile to Linley.

Linley immediately once more thanked the king for his generosity. In reality, Clayde had already discussed the question of conferring rank and land with Linley in private. Today, they were simply openly announcing it in court.

Upon leaving the palace, Linley engaged in some idle conversation with the other ministers. The highest level of power in the Kingdom of Fenlai was mostly occupied by the Minister of War, the Left Premier, the Right Premier, the Inspector General, and other people on the similar level. These people virtually governed the entirety of affairs in the Kingdom of Fenlai, and most of these people had the rank of Marquis. Even the lowest ranked amongst them, the Inspector General, was a Marquis.

On Greenleaf Road. Linley was seated within his carriage, his eyes closed as he quietly trained. “Lord Linley, we’re here.” The servant’s voice rang out from outside the carriage. Linley opened his eyes, then pushed the curtain to his carriage open. Bebe directly leapt from the carriage seat onto Linley’s shoulders.

“Wow, what a big estate!” Bebe’s eyes were gleaming as he stared at the mansion.

Linley was also carefully inspecting the estate which the ruler of Fenlai had gifted him. This estate took up a vast expanse of land, and the main gate alone was over ten meters wide. Through the open gate, Linley could see there were many male servants, female servants, and also many Knights of the Radiant Temple.

*Not bad.* Linley nodded as he entered. “Milord.” Seeing the gatekeeper bow respectfully, instantly all of the male and female servants in the courtyard



suddenly stopped whatever it was they were doing and bowed respectfully towards Linley. It was important for them to give Linley a good first impression. These servants all knew how incredible their new master was.

“Master Linley, congratulations, congratulations!” Suddenly, a very familiar voice rang out from not far away.

Linley turned his head. “Mr. Bernard.” The person who had come was the leader of the Debs clan, Bernard Debs. Bernard smiled at Linley. “Master Linley, what a coincidence. My clan’s manor is also on Greenleaf Road. We’re only one house over. In the future, it will be quite easy for us to visit each other.”

“Oh.” Thinking back to when he had first rescued Alice and delivered her and Kalan back to Fenlai City, it did seem as though Kalan’s manor was not too far away.

“But Master Linley, your manor is much larger than mine. This manor of yours used to be where his Majesty himself lived,” Bernard said admiringly.

Linley himself felt that this manor was astonishingly large, much larger than his ancestral mansion. To have such an enormous estate in Fenlai City, where each inch of land was as valuable as an inch of gold, was not something mere wealth could accomplish. So this was the former residence of his Majesty, King Clayde? No wonder it was so large!

“Mr. Bernard, I have to head back now. In the future, we’ll be able to chat quite often.” Linley smiled modestly, then turned his head and walked towards his own manor.

Right at this moment, at the gate to the Debs clan’s manor, Kalan, Rowling, and Alice were standing and watching from afar.

## Tomes of Magic

In terms of both furnishings and layout, this estate was definitely first rate. Linley was particularly fond of the Hot Springs Garden.

The Hot Springs Garden within the estate was the place where his Majesty trained when he lived here. Clayde was a warrior of the ninth rank. In order to become such a mighty warrior, naturally he didn't rely solely on his raw talent. He also spent years of painstaking effort.

The right half of the Hot Springs Garden was covered in a large, grassy area, filled with all sorts of exercise equipment. On the left side of the Hot Springs Garden, next to a man-made hill, was a hot springs pool. The hot springs within this pool came naturally from underground. After a day of frenzied training, spending some time in the hot springs pool definitely was a wonderful way of relaxing.

Linley was currently bathing nude within the pool. The bubbling hot water rushed against his skin, making Linley feel so comfortable that his eyes began to close.

"Boss, when are we going to kill that Patterson guy? Last night, during the dinner, I really wanted to kill him for you already." Bebe hopped out of the pool, all the fur on his body wet.

"Don't be impatient." Exiting the hot springs, Linley changed into a clean set of training clothes, then walked over to the grassy area while beginning to mumble the words to a spell. After a few moments, an earthen glow began to cover the ground beneath Linley in a certain area as earth elemental essence began to swirl about him.

Earth magic – Supergravity Field.

Linley immediately leapt into the air, then inverted himself, head pointed down, feet pointing up. Using his two hands, he kept himself upright. Next, he

moved to holding himself up with just one finger on each hand. Relying on just one finger, under the pressure of the Supergravity Field, Linley began to push himself up and down.

“One. Two...” Linley counted silently. Each time he reached a thousand, Linley would change to a different finger. The most important thing for a fighter was his physical conditioning. Only a strong body would be able to accommodate a high amount of battle-qi. Only through this method would he be able to quickly grow strong! Even though he was now a Dragonblood Warrior, he still needed to maintain his daily training regime.

“Hrm?” After training for about half an hour, Linley returned to the normal upright position. Linley stared coldly at the attractive female attendant who had just entered the Hot Springs Garden, carrying a tray with tea and fruit on top of it.

“Mi-milord, here is some fruit and tea.” The female attendant was made somewhat uneasy by Linley’s stare, and she stammered a bit.

“I didn’t call for you,” Linley snapped coldly.

The nervous female attendant stammered, “Milord, I... I was worried that you were thirsty.”

“Thirsty?” Linley glanced at her expressionlessly, then shouted, “Guards!” Instantly, four burly warriors rushed in from outside the Hot Springs Garden. These four warriors all belonged to the Radiant Church, which had dispatched over a hundred knights to safeguard Linley.

“Mercy, milord!” The attendant was so scared, she fell to her knees. In the Yulan continent, nobles had a much higher status than commoners, especially high ranking nobles, who could casually kill a commoner without repercussion. As for Linley, whom even the king of the Kingdom of Fenlai treated courteously? Without question Linley was one of the highest ranking nobles in the Kingdom of Fenlai.

Linley glanced at the attendant. In a cold voice, he said, “Remember this. In the future, when I am in the Hot Springs Garden, no one is permitted entry. Anyone who does enter will be punished with twenty strikes of the military rod.”

“Twenty strikes of the rod?” The attendant’s face turned pale. Military rods were extremely heavy. Even most muscular warriors would not be able to move for ten days or half a month after receiving twenty strikes of a military rod. A physically weak maid might very well die from such a beating.

“Mercy, milord! Mercy!” The female attendant hurriedly pled.

Linley continued, “You should know better, but since this is your first time committing such an offense, I instead sentence you to twenty lashes of a rattan whip. If you make this mistake again, I definitely will not be merciful.”

“Thank you, milord! Thank you, milord!” The female attendant felt relieved. The strikes from a rattan whip would sting quite a bit, possibly causing even more pain than a military rod, but it wouldn’t cause any serious wounds or any internal damage. It would hurt, but it wouldn’t kill.

“Remove her,” Linley ordered the four warriors.

“Yes, Lord Linley.” Two of the warriors stepped forward, pulling the attendant away and frog-marching her out. As for the tea and the fruit on the tray, those were all left on the floor.

Linley turned and once more returned to the grassy area, a slight frown on his face.

The Bloodviolet Godsword was one of Linley’s secret weapons. Although whenever he trained with it, Linley usually made sure to keep it straight and hard, on occasion, Linley would also let it remain flexible and wield it in a bizarre, flowing manner. Linley had to make certain that the secret of the Bloodviolet Godsword was not discovered by anyone. This meant that he could not allow anyone to watch him train.

With his right hand, Linley stroked his waist. Instantly, with a cold, violet flash, an extremely thin violet blade appeared in Linley’s hands.

Swish! From within the Hot Springs Garden, one ray of violet light after another began to appear, while Linley roved back and forth within the garden like a wandering dragon. Having totally merged the support of the wind-style Supersonic spell with his own power, not only was Linley extremely fast, he was also incredibly agile.

Through the usage of the Secret Dragonblood Manual, Linley trained his body. When he was relaxed, he would engage in the carving of sculptures to raise his spiritual energy, while he would enter the meditative trance in the middle of the hot springs to refine his mageforce. His training permeated his every daily activity.

Unfortunately, Linley still was not able to find a good opportunity to make his move against Patterson. After all, he had relatively few encounters with Patterson. If Linley went directly to Patterson's manor, or Patterson came to Linley's residence, once Linley killed Patterson then King Clayde would find out within perhaps just half a day.

No matter how great Linley's potential was, if he murdered King Clayde's own brother, Clayde definitely would not be gentle with him.

Linley was gracefully eating lunch within the main hall. After he finished lunch, Linley once again began thinking about Patterson. "This Patterson fellow hasn't come to visit me at all. Seems like I'll have to personally pay a visit." Linley decided to no longer be the hunter setting a snare for the rabbit. He would head directly to the Patterson manor.

"Milord." Just at this moment, an attendant ran over from outside. "Milord, Lord Cardinal Guillermo of the Radiant Church has arrived."

"Guillermo?" Linley trembled, then he immediately headed for the door, going out to personally welcome Guillermo.

Within the main hall. "Linley, I hear that your recent life has been leisurely and carefree. Every day, either you are training, resting in the hot springs, or engaging in stonesculpting. This sort of life really makes one envious," Guillermo said with a laugh to Linley. Linley nodded and laughed as well.

"But Linley," Guillermo said solemnly, "I must remind you that although your sculptures are worth money, the thing which truly determines a person's status is power! Just look at that nearby Debs clan. Don't they have money? But in terms of status, they are inferior to you."

Linley understood this rationale as well. True, money was a useful thing. But when one reached a certain level, the uses of money would grow fewer and fewer. For example, to a Saint-level combatant, money was nothing more than

a worldly possession. This was also why the Dawson Conglomerate had been willing to offer a hundred million gold coins to acquire Linley and have him join them. To these trading unions, the support of a super-combatant was simply too vital.

“Lord Guillermo, I thank you for your reminder,” Linley said with a smile. Linley didn’t say, of course, that stonesculpting that was the true reason behind him becoming a seventeen-year-old dual-element magus of the seventh rank.

“I’m just making small talk. After all, when you need to rest, you should.” Guillermo glanced at one of the Vicars behind him, who immediately opened the package he had been carrying on his back. After opening the silver-white package, a stone case was revealed within. The Vicar then placed this stone case between Linley and Guillermo. “Lord Guillermo, this is?” But Linley already had an idea as to what this was.

Guillermo laughed with self-satisfaction. “Linley. Open it up yourself.” Linley slowly opened the stone case, lifting up the lid. Within the stone case, there were two tomes made from silk thread. Both of these two tomes appeared to be colored a dark gold color.

“This is...?” Linley looked towards Guillermo.

“Linley, didn’t I previously say that I was going to give to you books regarding magical incantations for wind-style and earth spells? That’s what these two tomes are,” Guillermo laughed.

Linley couldn’t help but feel excited. Magical incantations and the proper method by which one cast the spell were both very important. Otherwise, even if one had enough spiritual energy and mageforce, one still wouldn’t be able to cast more powerful spells. Linley immediately withdrew one of the two books and opened it up.

“Wind-style!” Upon reading the first page, Linley saw that the first page was a general summary regarding this tome. After the summary, it began to describe one wind spell after another. This tome explained everything in great detail, and also clearly explained what to focus on for every single spell.

Linley flipped directly to the section on spells of the seventh rank, feeling astonished as he read through one powerful, intricately designed spell after

another. Linley had to admit, the bygone people who had invented these spells in the past were, without a doubt, absolute geniuses.

“Spell of the ninth rank – Windshadow Technique. It was derived from a combination of the ‘Supersonic’ spell and the ‘Airwings’ spell. It possesses the special effects given by the Airwings spell, great speed, and great agility. It can be described as perfect...”

Seeing the deep, in-depth explanation of the Windshadow spell within this tome, Linley felt all the more excited. A brand new world of magic was beginning to open up in front of him. In the future, with his prowess in earth-style and wind magic as well as the power of a Dragonblood Warrior, his future offensive potential would be enough to cause anyone to shudder.

Seeing how Linley had become totally absorbed with these magical tomes, Guillermo quietly left by himself without making a sound.



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Within the Hot Springs Garden. Linley was seated cross-legged on the grass, all of his muscles and bones quivering as the special dragonblood battle-qi permeated through his body with its force, causing every part of him to experience a constant strengthening.

“Boss, Patterson will be arriving tonight. You still in the mood to train?” Bebe mumbled, lying next to Linley.

Linley opened his eyes and looked at Bebe. “In the mood?” Linley felt bitter. Early this morning, that Duke Patterson had sent word via messenger that tonight, he wanted to come have a one-on-one visit with Linley. As the Minister of Finance, Duke Patterson naturally felt the need to be on good relations with all the other important nobles. These past few days, he had been busy dealing with the issues raised by illegally mining and smuggling water jade, which was why he hadn’t had the time to visit Linley yet.

“I’m not in the mood, no, but I must train. Only when I have enough strength will I be able to do what I want to do,” Linley murmured to himself. Per his

current plans, he would kill Patterson within half a year as well as find out who the person behind Patterson was. After that, Linley would, before the next anniversary of his father's death, either find out what happened to his mother or kill the person behind Patterson.

*Swish! Swish!* "Ahhhh!" A miserable scream suddenly rang out from outside the Hot Springs Garden. Linley immediately leaped atop the man-made hill within the Hot Springs Garden. Standing on the top of the hill, he could clearly see that the bodies of those ten or so Knights of the Radiant Church who had been standing guard had begun to decay. They screamed in agony nonstop as their blood stained the ground.

At the same time, a dense black fog began to billow at high speed towards the Hot Springs Garden from every direction. Wherever this black fog passed, everything, be it animal or human, would begin to corrode and then die.

Linley looked up into the sky. It, too, was now covered with that dense black fog which swept towards him at high speed.

"Someone's here." Linley could sense that within that dense black fog, there were several black blurs that were charging towards him at high speed. There was nowhere for Linley to flee!

"Haaaargh!" At a high speed, Linley descended from the man-made hill and then dove into the hot springs pool as if he were a fish.



## Heavy Casualties

The hot springs water bubbled about. By now, Linley was at the bottom of the hot springs. This hot springs pool wasn't very deep, at most around two meters or so. Right now, Linley was pressing his body against the bottom of the pool. The water of the springs was very clear, and Linley could vaguely see what was going on outside.

*Who are these people? Why were the warriors of the Radiant Church outside unable to take a single blow from them?* Linley's mind was full of suspicions. No matter what, the warriors of the Radiant Church outside were all at least of the fifth rank. Every single one of them possessed the ability to use battle-qi.

Could it be that for some reason, these warriors were not able to use battle-qi to block that black fog? Linley didn't understand what was going on, so for now he did not dare to come out and directly resist the black fog!

"Linley, that black fog should be a fairly common darkness spell known as the 'Corrosive Fog'. You can definitely use battle-qi to resist its effects." Doehring Cowart's voice rang out in Linley's mind.

"But those warriors of the Radiant Church..."

"They should have been attacked by a different sort of spell that bewilders the mind, preventing them from utilizing their battle-qi in time to defend against the spell." This was Doehring Cowart's deduction.

*Gurgle, gurgle.* From around Linley's body, a gust of wind began to billow outwards. It was the wind spell, Windscout. Linley could completely sense everything which was going on outside.

"Quick, no matter what the cost, we have to kill Linley," the leader in black said coldly. The other five black-robed men all nodded, charging towards the hot springs at high speed.

Right at this moment... “Swish!” Like an arrow, Linley shot out of the pool into the air, splattering beads of water everywhere. And then, Linley descended from above them like a fierce tiger leaping down from the mountains, his five fingers formed into claws as he ripped towards the head of one of the black-robed men.

“Hmph.” That black-robed man’s body quivered slightly, as he prepared to use his left arm to forcibly block Linley’s claw attack while stabbing out with the sharp knife in his right hand.

A hint of a vicious smile appeared on Linley’s face. Suddenly, bluish-black Dragonblood battle-qi covered the right arm of Linley, which was attacking with a claw hand. The layer of Dragonblood battle-qi was very thin. Given its thinness and the fact that the surrounding area was full of the dark ‘Corrosive Fog’, it wasn’t very visible at all. Most importantly... sharp claws suddenly appeared from where Linley’s fingernails had been.

*Shiiiiirk!* Linley’s right hand easily pierced through the black-robed man’s shoulder blade. At the same time, Linley once again used force on his right hand, giving it a fierce twist.

*Crack!* The left side of the black-robed man’s chest completely exploded, splattering fresh blood everywhere. The black-robed man died almost instantly, and right before his death he stared in disbelief. His knife had stabbed Linley’s body but didn’t leave a mark at all.

“A seventh rank Earthguard armor is made out of jadestone. Do you think jadestone is so easily overcome?” Linley mused to himself. “Much less, aside from the layer of jadestone armor, the skin on my body can instantly transform into the Dragonblood Warrior’s scales.”

Right now, when under the full Dragonblood Warrior state, Linley had the power of a warrior of the early eighth rank. When using ‘Dragonform’, Linley inherited the hallmark property of the Armored Razorback Wurm; incredible defensive powers. Linley’s black scales were much stronger than the jadestone armor.

Judging from the power of that stab by the black-robed man, he had most likely been an expert of the seventh rank. Unfortunately, the defensive abilities

of that expert of the seventh rank were totally unable to defend against this claw attack by Linley. These were the draconic claws of a transformed Dragonblood Warrior, albeit only in the Demidragon state.

“How is that possible?” The other four black-robed men were stunned. Based on their information, Linley was a dual-element magus of the seventh rank and his warrior abilities were far weaker. They didn’t expect that an assassin of the seventh rank couldn’t withstand a single blow from him. “Our intelligence was wrong!” the leader of the black-robed men standing in the very back cursed mentally.

But Linley only nodded to himself. “It seems that when using a partial transformation, one can catch the opponent off-guard and make them suffer a serious loss.”

“You Cult of Shadows bastards!” Furious roars could be heard ringing out from outside, travelling at high speed towards the Hot Springs Garden. Linley understood that another group of the Knights of the Radiant Church charged with his protection had arrived. Only ten or so people had been killed just now, while his total guard numbered over a hundred.

The expression on the face of the leader of the black-robed men changed. “No matter the cost, kill Linley!” the black-robed leader shouted. He then led the four remaining black-robed men to surround and attack Linley. The black knives in their hands gleamed with a dark aura as they seemingly infused every last bit of their power into the knives in their hands. This was an attack which they were willing to give up their own lives to make!

“Warriors of the seventh rank, right?” Seeing the group attack of these black-robed men, Linley didn’t dodge or hide at all. With his right hand, Linley gently touched his waist. Suddenly... a cold, fierce, brilliant violet light flashed.

At the same time, Linley retreated at high speed towards the back. Of the five people attacking Linley, four remained at their original spots, while the fifth, the leader, hurriedly retreated at high speed.

*Shirrrrrrrrrrk!*

The stomachs of those four black-robed men were sliced open. Their stomach and intestines fell to the ground, and blood sprayed everywhere. “Fast. And

sharp!” The leader of the black-robed men stared in astonishment at Linley. A single sword stroke killing four warriors of the seventh rank. This attack was really too terrifying.

Linley knew very well how sharp this Bloodviolet Godsword was, but Bloodviolet’s natural sharpness alone probably wouldn’t have been enough to penetrate the defense of a magical beast of the seventh rank. Similarly, if a warrior of the seventh rank was to use battle-qi to protect his body, at most Linley would only be able to heavily injure him, not kill him.

But just now, those four black-robed men had been using all of the energy on their attacks! They didn’t expect Linley to have such an incredible sword on him.

“If I want to enhance the power of Bloodviolet, I would have to activate it via my Dragonblood battle-qi. But if I use the Dragonblood battle-qi, the speed of Bloodviolet will be slower than if I used my wind-style mageforce to activate it.” At this moment, Linley was pondering the pros and cons of each.

Just then, it was true that Linley had used a single strike to kill the four of them. What he had relied on was his astonishing speed, an attack so fast that his opponents weren’t able to respond to it! But just relying on speed and the sharpness of his sword would generally only be enough to kill a warrior of the sixth rank, or to heavily wound a warrior of the seventh rank.

Only if the warrior of the seventh rank were to act like these four assassins and concentrate all of their battle-qi on their attack, not caring about his life and sparing nothing for defense, would Linley be able to kill them. “And the leader didn’t suffer much of an injury.” Linley looked at the leader of the black-robed men. This black-robed man’s power should most likely have exceeded the seventh rank.

Using wind-style mageforce on Bloodviolet could make Bloodviolet move faster and make its movements more smooth, but it couldn’t raise the attacking power! But if he were to use Dragonblood battle-qi on Bloodviolet, he could increase the attack power but wouldn’t be able to increase his attack speed.

“You pieces of trash!” Angry roars erupted from right outside the Hot Springs Garden. Clearly, these Knights of the Radiant Church had just seen the corpses

of their companions and were all furious now.

“Linley, you are even more formidable than we thought you were. But unfortunately, you have sided with the Radiant Church. Thus...” The black-robed leader seemed to pay no attention at all to those who were outside, as he spoke in a soft voice to Linley.

The black-robed leader’s voice seemed to carry a certain unique timbre to it. At first, Linley didn’t notice anything, but by the time the black-robed man was halfway through his words, Linley could feel his mind grow a bit blurry and his focus waver. “Thus, you must die!” The black knife of the black-robed man arrived almost instantly at Linley’s chest.

“Linley!” Doehring Cowart’s mental roar echoed in Linley’s mind, instantly bringing Linley back to his senses.

*Crunch!* The black-robed leader stared at his waist in astonishment. His waist had suddenly been bitten almost in half. His exposed muscles were still trembling, and blood was pouring out in a torrent. The black-robed man could clearly feel that his entire body had lost all strength. His life-force was quickly draining away.

“This Shadowmouse...” The black-robed leader stared stupidly at the black Shadowmouse by Linley’s side. A black Shadowmouse should at most be a magical beast of the third or fourth ranks. To this black-robed leader, as a warrior of the eighth rank, a black Shadowmouse shouldn’t be able to injure him at all. This was why the black-robed leader hadn’t paid any attention to it.

But... just then, that little black Shadowmouse had flown over, quickly transformed his jaws into a larger size, then taken a vicious, giant bite out of his waist.

“Hmph! Let’s see you be cocky now. You should consider it an honor to have died by the hands of I, Bebe.” Bebe stood near the corpse of the black-robed leader, his little head raised proudly.

Linley couldn’t help but laugh. Bebe was a freak of nature that could even withstand the final dying blow of an Armored Razorback Wurm. Bebe was capable of even biting and breaking the tough, massive plated scales of a Velocidragon of the eighth rank! In terms of both offense and defense, Bebe

was now extremely powerful.

His only flaw was, he was simply too small. Even if Bebe managed to land a bite against those giant magical beasts, he might not be able to totally chew through their thick massive scales or skin in one bite.

“Bastard!” Those angrily howling Knights of the Radiant Church charged to Linley’s side. Just as they prepared to do battle with their opponents... they saw the ground littered with corpses.

“Milord, are you alright?” The leader of the knights immediately asked. Right now, Linley’s appearance was very frightening. Both his face and his body were covered with blood.

“I’m fine. I only suffered some light wounds,” Linley said. “You dispose of the corpses. I’ll go take a rest.” As he spoke, Linley immediately walked out of the Hot Springs Garden. And now, when the knights lowered their head to stare at the corpses, they couldn’t help but begin to frown.

The corpse of the black-robed leader was missing half of his waist, as though it had been bitten off, or perhaps cut off by claws. The other four black-robed assassins had been cut cleanly in half, while for the last one, it seemed as though his left chest had entirely exploded, revealing his bones.

“What... how...” The group of knights stared dumbly, their jaws slack. They didn’t imagine that Linley, a magus, could cause his enemies to die like this.



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At the top level of the Radiant Temple. The long, skinny form of the Holy Emperor was covered by a long, whitish-silver robe. He reclined on a chair, leisurely flipping through some books. His bald head shone dazzlingly like the sun.

“Holy Emperor.” The red-robed Guillermo bowed obediently in front of him.

“Hrm?” The Holy Emperor twitched his eyelids, glancing at Guillermo.

Being watched by the Holy Emperor was like being under pressure from a

thirty thousand pound boulder. Guillermo respectfully said, “Holy Emperor, just now, the Cult of Shadows made an assassination attempt against Linley. Fortunately, Linley’s abilities as a warrior are quite profound. He managed to kill all of the attackers, suffering only a light wound.”

“Killed them?” The Holy Emperor looked at Guillermo with his jade-blue eyes. With a light laugh, he said, “Guillermo, the Cult of Shadows is aware that Linley is a dual-element magus of the seventh rank. Could it be that they didn’t send a sufficiently competent force?”

“Holy Emperor, this group of assassins was quite powerful. The lead assassin should also have been a specialist at using mind-bewitching darkness magic,” Guillermo hurriedly said.

The Holy Emperor didn’t say anything else, only faintly smiled as he looked at Guillermo. “Guillermo, are you proposing...?”

Guillermo nodded. “Right. Linley is an important individual who needs to be trained well by the Radiant Church. More importantly, not only does Linley possess high natural talent, he is also an extremely hard worker. I believe that after another fifty years, it is very likely that Linley will become a Saint-level combatant. And in a hundred years... Linley will be one of the ranked Saint-level combatants of the Yulan continent.”

If a man did not prepare for the future, his present would be filled with problems. Both the Radiant Church and the Cult of Shadows had existed for many years now. Even back when the Yulan Empire had unified the Yulan continent, they had existed.

The reason they were able to last for so long, was because they both understood the importance of one thing: Cultivating talent! They were constantly expanding, constantly converting believers, constantly cultivating talent.

Perhaps right now, Linley wasn’t too powerful, but a century later? He might approach the level of the Holy Emperor in power. To a Saint-level combatant, a hundred years was nothing at all.

“That’s why I wish for Linley to receive even better instruction, as well as better protection. In other words... I wish for Linley to go train alongside Lord

‘Fallen Leaf’,” Guillermo said.

“Fallen Leaf?” The Holy Emperor was startled, but then he nodded. “Fine, then. But first, you must go seek his approval. I certainly don’t have the authority to decide on behalf of Fallen Leaf.”

“Yes, Holy Emperor.” Guillermo paid his respects and left.

The Holy Emperor glanced at the departing Guillermo with his jade-blue eyes, and then stared at the sky outside the window. “He killed all of the attackers? Baruch... Baruch... hrm. As I recall, the Baruch clan was one of the clans of the Four Supreme Warriors. The Dragonblood Warrior clan.”



## An Excessive Desire to Kill

During the recent assassination attempt, Linley's side suffered the losses of eighteen Knights of the Radiant Church, four female attendants, and two male attendants. As a result of this, the Radiant Church further strengthened and enlarged the security detail within the estate.

That same night of the assassination, within the manor.

"Linley, are you okay?" King Clayde asked solicitously.

"I'm only slightly wounded, your Majesty." Linley's arm was wrapped with medical gauze.

Actually, Linley hadn't been injured at all during this attack, but he didn't want others to know exactly how powerful he was. Thus, he lightly injured himself on purpose, using his straight chisel to cut himself on his arm.

To Linley, who had previously suffered the pain of the initial Dragonform transformation, this sort of pain was nothing.

"As long as you are fine, Linley." Duke Patterson, who was by King Clayde's side, laughed.

Linley looked at Duke Patterson.

Tonight should have been the night for the meeting between Linley and Duke Patterson, but because of the assassination attempt, the two of them no longer would have the chance to have a private conversation tonight.

"Second brother, it's best that we don't disturb Linley any further. Let's allow him to have a good rest," Clayde turned his head and said.

"Yes, your Majesty." Patterson glanced at Linley, and then followed King Clayde out.

Linley felt as though there were a hint of helplessness in the look Patterson

had given him. Clearly, per Patterson's original plan, there were some things he wished to discuss with Linley in private during their scheduled one-on-one meeting.

But clearly, this was no longer an appropriate time.

In the next few days, the estate once more returned to normal.

"Boss, today is May 18th, right?" Bebe, who was enjoying lunch alongside Linley, suddenly spoke mentally to Linley.

"Right. What is it?" Linley looked at Bebe.

Bebe wrinkled his little nose. Quirking his mouth, he mentally said, "Boss, have you forgotten? That Bernard fellow, the leader of the Debs clan, told us that June 18th would be the date of his son's engagement ceremony. He invited you to attend as well. It's now May 18th. You only have a month left."

"Engagement?"

Linley was startled.

A month from now, Alice and Kalan would be getting engaged.

"That's none of my business." Linley quickly returned to his usual calm demeanor, lowering his head and continuing to eat.

Bebe's beady little eyes rolled around three times, and then he used his tiny little paws to rub at his chin. A look of suspicion on his face, he said, "Could it be that I, Bebe, am mistaken? Shouldn't be the case. I'm so awesome, after all. My judgment is excellent. In his heart, the Boss certainly cares about this affair. If it were me, Bebe, I would smash that little Kalan's skull in with a single paw."

"Lord Linley."

One of the guardian knights entered the main hall. "Lord Linley. Cardinal Guillermo has come."

"Guillermo?" Linley hesitated for just one moment, then he immediately put down his utensils and went to the door.

In the entire hierarchy of the Radiant Church, the person whom Linley was most familiar with and had the best relationship with was probably Cardinal

Guillermo. When someone treated Linley as courteously as Guillermo did, Linley naturally wouldn't act in a high, arrogant manner, as though he thought himself better.

"Linley, there's something I must tell you." Upon seeing Linley, Guillermo began to chuckle with joy as he spoke.

Linley looked at Guillermo questioningly. "What is it?"

Beaming, Guillermo said, "Linley, are you aware that within our Radiant Church, we have a special group of people known as... Ascetics?"

"Yes, I am." Linley nodded.

Previously, when he had been kidnapped by those experts from the Cult of Shadows, it was the Deputy Arbiter of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal as well as an Ascetic and several Executors who had scared the opponents away. Only then had he been able to return to the City of Fenlai.

"Within our Radiant Church, there have been many people obsessed with magic or fighting skills who have enlisted within the ranks of the Ascetics. Put another way, neither the Knights of the Radiant Temple, nor the Ecclesiastical Tribunal, have as many experts amongst their ranks as the Ascetics do."

Guillermo beamed as he patted Linley on the shoulders. "What I am about to tell you is that you have the chance to become the disciple of a legendary Ascetic."

"A legendary Ascetic?" Linley frowned.

Guillermo smiled faintly. "This legendary Ascetic is considered to be at the highest levels, even amongst the Ascetics. He also possesses an extremely high status within our Radiant Church. As for his power, even if we look at the Yulan continent as a whole, there are perhaps only those three freaks of nature who can surpass him in power."

"Three freaks of nature?" Linley instantly grew curious. "Lord Guillermo, who are these three freaks of nature that you speak of?"

While chatting, the two of them walked back to the main hall.

Guillermo didn't reply right away. He glanced at the Vicar next to him, and the

Vicar instantly escorted everyone present away, then obediently stepped out himself, closing the door.

In the entire main hall, only Linley, Guillermo, and Bebe were now present.

“Linley, in the future, it’s possible that you will meet with these people, so it isn’t a big deal if I tell you about them now,” Guillermo said, putting on a mysterious air.

Linley looked at Guillermo curiously.

Guillermo sighed. “Here in the Yulan continent, there are three individuals who have surpassed the existence of the Saint-level combatants. The three ‘freaks of nature’ I talked about, are precisely those three freaks.”

“Those who ascended past the level of Saints? That would make them Gods?” Linley was shocked.

“Right. You can refer to them as Gods.” Guillermo nodded.

Linley immediately perked up his ears to listen closely.

Guillermo slowly said, “Across the entirety of the Yulan continent, there are only three such freaks. The first freak is the ‘High Priest of the Living Temple’ of the Yulan Empire. Many people simply refer to him as the ‘High Priest’. I, at least, have no idea how old the High Priest is. He has been alive for simply too long.”

Linley nodded.

“This second freak has been alive an extremely long time. He is the true ruler of the third most dangerous place in the Yulan continent, the Forest of Darkness. This freak is supposedly a magical beast in nature, but he has already reached the level of being able to transform into a human. Linley, you should already know that when a magical beast reaches the Saint level, he can transform his body enough to speak in human tongues, but is not able to transform into a human form. You can imagine for yourself how terrifying a magical beast who can transform into a human must be.”

Linley nodded slightly.

He had previously heard Doehring Cowart speak of these two individuals.

Even back when Doehring Cowart was alive, these two had been invincible presences.

“And the third person?” Linley asked.

Guillermo sighed. “This third person is also someone who I revere greatly. He was the founding Emperor of the O’Brien Empire, the most militarily powerful empire in the Yulan continent. People call him the ‘War God O’Brien’.”

“O’Brien?” Linley memorized this name.

Given that the O’Brien Empire was named after this person, one could imagine how amazing he was.

“Five thousand years ago, the War God quickly rose to prominence, defeating one Saint-level combatant after another. In that era, there were many super-combatants, such as the Four Supreme Warriors, who appeared during that time period.” Guillermo smiled at Linley.

Linley thought back to his own ancestor, Baruch.

The first leader of the Baruch clan had appeared almost exactly five thousand years ago as well.

“Back then, the Four Supreme Warriors were extremely powerful, but their brilliance was totally eclipsed by the War God. The War God defeated one powerful Saint-level combatant after another, and in the end, even engaged in a great battle with the High Priest, in the air above the Yulan River. During the course of their battle, the shockwaves alone killed over ten thousand people. In the end, both the O’Brien Empire and the Yulan Empire gave up a large amount of territory, allowing it to form into three independent kingdoms which served as buffer zones between these two great Empires.” Guillermo sighed emotionally.

“Linley, in the minds of many, the High Priest is the most powerful human alive. But the War God was actually able to fight to a stalemate with the High Priest. But how few years had the War God been alive for? This is why so many people are in awe of him. Who knows what level of power the War God is now at, after five thousand years of training.” Guillermo sighed with praise.

Linley secretly nodded as well.

“This War God. He fought the High Priest to a stalemate?” Doehring Cowart’s voice rang out in Linley’s mind. “How is that possible?”

Back in Doehring Cowart’s era, the High Priest’s brilliance eclipsed everyone in the world.

In Doehring Cowart’s heart, the High Priest was invincible and undefeatable.

“Grandpa Doehring, every era will see super-combatants emerge. If you, Grandpa Doehring, hadn’t died back then and had continued to train, perhaps one day you would’ve also broken past the Saint level and become an expert on the same level as the High Priest,” Linley mentally said.

Doehring Cowart let out a low sigh and no longer spoke.

“Enough talk about those three freaks. The person I am about to have you meet is only inferior to those three. If you can become his disciple, it will be of great benefit to you as you attempt to increase your power in magic,” Guillermo said.

Linley laughed inside.

As far as someone who was only inferior to those three freaks... wasn’t his own Grandpa Doehring someone who was at the peak of the Saint level?

“What is the name of this Ascetic?” Linley asked.

“His name is... Fallen Leaf.”



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Within one of the slums of Fenlai City.

Only now did Linley realize that within Fenlai City, one of the largest, most prosperous cities in the Yulan continent, there was such an impoverished, desolate place. It was far worse off than even his own hometown of Wushan.

At this moment, Linley and Guillermo were walking shoulder-to-shoulder within a foul, dirty alley.

“Lord Guillermo, the Lord Fallen Leaf that you spoke of lives here?” Linley

couldn't believe it.

"Right." Guillermo nodded. "Linley, remember, this Lord Fallen Leaf detests those nobles who think themselves better than others. Thus, you must be modest and courteous, even towards these poor people."

Linley glanced at the poor people lining the streets.

Not too far away, he saw a seven-or eight-year-old child, malnourished to the point of being skin and bones, who wore a foul, oily black rag as his clothes. This child was staring at Linley with fear in his eyes.

Due to his skinniness, his sunken eyes seemed particularly large.

Those innocent eyes made Linley's heart tremble.

Linley didn't do anything, just continued to walk forward alongside Guillermo. On the road, Linley saw one poor child after another. None of them wore any proper clothes, and all of them were extremely poor.

"Here we are," Guillermo suddenly said.

Linley couldn't help but turn his head to look.

They were standing in front of a casually erected metal frame-like dwelling. An old man who looked like a beggar sat in the middle of the building. The old man was so skinny that it made one's heart quiver, and all the skin on his body was sagging down. His hands were like the claws of a chicken, only skin and bone.

This old fellow was looking at Linley with curiosity.

"Lord Fallen Leaf," Guillermo said respectfully.

"He really is Lord Fallen Leaf?" Linley wasn't sure in his heart, but seeing Guillermo behave in such a manner, he was forced to believe it.

But could this old man in front of him, who looked like a beggar that could be blown down by a good gust of wind, really be the high Saint-level combatant, Lord 'Fallen Leaf'?

"Guillermo, this is the one you mentioned to me, the so-called kid with talent?" The old beggar asked.

“Yes, Lord Fallen Leaf,” Guillermo said respectfully.

“Grandpa Fallen Leaf, Grandpa Fallen Leaf, quick, help save my mother. She was beaten and injured by someone!” A youthful voice rang out, then a girl came running in, carrying her skinny mother on her back.

The old beggar immediately turned around and stretched his right hand out.

Surrounded by a holy light, that heavily wounded woman began to heal at an astonishing speed.

The old beggar turned back to look at Linley. “I will only teach those with kind hearts and pure souls. But you... your heart is filled with an excessive desire to kill. I will not teach you.”

Guillermo couldn't help but be astonished by these words.

“An excessive desire to kill?” A hint of a smile appeared on Linley's face.

The need to seek vengeance on behalf of his parents had caused unspeakable pain and torment to Linley. Every minute, he desired to kill Patterson, but he continued to force himself to be calm and to not be rash. But this sort of constant self-repression did indeed cause Linley's killing urge to only grow greater and greater.

“Then, Lord Fallen Leaf, I take my leave.” Linley bowed slightly, then turned and left.

The old beggar had originally wanted to say a few extra words. Upon seeing Linley turn and leave so cleanly and bluntly, he couldn't help but be startled. But then, a hint of a smile appeared on his face.



## The Engagement

“Lord Fallen Leaf.” Seeing how impolite Linley had been, Guillermo hurriedly apologized, “Lord Fallen Leaf, this Linley is only seventeen years old this year. Lord Fallen Leaf, please forgive his discourtesy.”

Guillermo knew very well what a great amount of influence this Fallen Leaf had within the Radiant Church. This Lord Fallen Leaf could be considered the spiritual leader of the entire Ascetic branch. Even the Holy Emperor himself didn’t have the ability to force him to go against his own will.

Using his skinny, chicken-claw like right hand, Fallen Leaf stroked his straggly beard. With curiosity, he watched Linley’s departing back. “Discourtesy? No, no. He wasn’t exactly discourteous. It can only be said that this kid acts very firmly and unwaveringly.”

Guillermo was startled.

He didn’t expect that this Lord Fallen Leaf, who initially had a poor impression of Linley, would now praise him.

“Guillermo.” Fallen Leaf looked at Guillermo.

“Lord Fallen Leaf, I await your instructions,” Guillermo said respectfully.

Smiling, Fallen Leaf said, “This Linley’s heart is filled with murderous intent, and he is firm and unwavering. I think a person like him will never hesitate in his actions, whether it be in killing or in anything else. A person like this is very much suited to be the sharp sword of the Radiant Church.”

Guillermo understood what Fallen Leaf meant.

Although the Radiant Church urged people to follow their better natures, towards the followers of other religions, the Radiant Church was ruthless and merciless. Naturally, this would require ruthless and merciless people. This was why the Ecclesiastical Tribunal of the Church was originally formed.

“Perhaps in the future, this kid, Linley, will become the new Praetor of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal,” Fallen Leaf said softly.

Guillermo couldn't help but turn to look at Linley's departing back.

Become the Praetor of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal?

Guillermo knew very well that the Praetor of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal could be considered the second highest ranking person within the Radiant Church. In fact, from some standpoints, it could be considered that the position of the Praetor of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal was on par with that of the Holy Emperor.

The Holy Emperor was, on the surface, the leader of the Radiant Church who wielded the most power.

But the Praetor of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal was the dark underside of the Radiant Church, the leader of the most powerful military force within the Church!

“Lord Fallen Leaf, are you willing to guide him?” Guillermo suddenly asked.

But Fallen Leaf still shook his head.

“Why?” Guillermo was confused. Since Fallen Leaf appreciated Linley, why wasn't he willing to train him?

Fallen Leaf shook his head. “My training methods are not suited for him. My way requires a pure heart, and is suited for someone whose heart faces the light. But as for him... the path he walks is the path of slaughter.”

Guillermo nodded.

“Guillermo, there's no need for you to find another master for him. A truly powerful person will rely on himself to find a path most suitable for himself. The teachings of others are, after all, based on their own ways.”

Fallen Leaf looked at Guillermo. “You are an Arch Magus of the ninth rank. Why, then, have I never instructed you? It's precisely because of this reason. Even if I tell you about what I have comprehended and my insights, you still will not succeed, because only after countless personal experiences will your soul transform, allowing you to comprehend deeper levels of mysteries. Only then will you succeed.”

“Remember. Rely on yourself.” Fallen Leaf smiled.

Guillermo nodded.

He hadn’t yet entered the Saint level, so there was no way for him to comprehend what the difference between the Saint level and the ninth rank was. Although at times, he wondered if Fallen Leaf was intentionally withholding valuable guidance from him, upon seeing Fallen Leaf’s sincere gaze and hearing his sincere voice, he believed him.

“Perhaps I really do have to rely on myself.”

Guillermo had been held at the ninth rank as a magus for a long time, now. He deeply desired to make a breakthrough.

After all, between the ninth rank and the Saint level, the difference between the two was like that of the heavens and the earth.



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Within Linley’s manor. The Hot Springs Garden.

Next to the hot springs pool, Linley was quietly seated in the meditative trance.

“Shudder, shudder.” Linley’s entire body was constantly emitting strange noises, as his bones and muscles continuously shuddered. Beads of sweat constantly flowed down his body.

Training in accordance with the Secret Dragonblood Manual was ten times more effective than using ordinary battle-qi training methods.

But this was only natural. After all, the requirements for one to be able to use the Secret Dragonblood Manual were also extremely intense.

“Why is training for humans so difficult? You even require all sorts of secret manuals that require different body types.” Lying next to Linley, Bebe’s little head turned to look at Linley, his mind full of questions.

He was a magical beast, and his training was very simple. He would directly absorb darkness-style elemental essence from the outside world, drawing it

into his body and into his magicite core.

There weren't any secrets. It was just a very natural absorption process.



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Linley continued to live this sort of quiet life, spending most of his time each day in training.

Using several high-quality training methods at the same time, he pushed his body's capacity for punishment to the maximum.

In the blink of an eye, over ten days passed.

"Whoosh!"

Wielding the Bloodviolet Godsword in his hands, Linley tested out one attack after another.

Which angle allowed the sword to strike out the fastest?

How to control the vibrations of Bloodviolet to reduce the hindrance of the natural air friction, and to make his sword move faster?

Time and time again, he painstakingly trained in striking with his sword.

Each time Linley made his move, a brilliant violet flash would appear.

The speed of these blows was enough to make one's heart quail.

But Linley was still not satisfied. He constantly pursued improvement, perfection. Using his understanding of wind elemental essence which was granted to him by his wind magic, he trained hard to make Bloodviolet move even quicker and more fluidly.

"Milord!" A voice called out from outside the Hot Springs Garden.

Linley paused. With a movement of his hand, the Bloodviolet Godsword in his hand disappeared. Nobody could notice that this Bloodviolet sword had wrapped around Linley's waist now.

Even if a normal person paid attention to his belt, they would only think it to be a purple belt.

“Enter.” Only now did Linley speak.

Instantly, a beautiful maid came running in at high speed. A look of worship on her face, she looked at Linley, and then immediately lowered her head and said respectfully, “Milord, the Debs clan has sent someone over with an invitation card.” As she spoke, she offered the invitation card to Linley.

Linley looked at the invitation card.

The invitation card was red in color, while the trimmings were golden. The words ‘invitation card’ were written on top in bright, bold characters.

“Invitation card?”

Linley accepted the invitation card, and then opened it. Indeed, the contents of the card were exactly what he had thought it would be.

“On June 18th, Kalan, Rowling, and Alice will carry out their engagement ceremony. Who is this Rowling?” Staring at the invitation card, Linley frowned.

“You can leave now,” Linley said calmly.

“Yes, milord,” the attendant said respectfully, then she departed from the Hot Springs Garden.

“Boss, is that Debs clan arranging the engagement ceremony for Alice?” Bebe leapt onto Linley’s shoulders, then stretched his little head out to peer at the card.

“Uh, Rowling? Who is Rowling?” Bebe looked at Linley suspiciously.

Doehring Cowart also appeared next to Linley. Seeing the invitation letter, a hint of a smile appeared on his face.

“Grandpa Doehring.” Linley turned to look at Doehring Cowart.

“Are you wondering who Rowling is?” Doehring Cowart really was someone who had only gotten craftier with age. He instantly understood. “It’s simple. Your sculpture, ‘Awakening From the Dream’, made many people familiar with Alice’s appearance. Although they don’t know who Alice is, once the engagement ceremony is publicized, many people will see Alice. By then, they will definitely recognize her as being the mold for your creation of ‘Awakening From the Dream’. The love story contained within your sculpture is clearly

visible to anyone who has ever analyzed stonesculpting. And precisely for this reason, the Debs clan definitely is not willing to allow Alice to become Kalan's principal wife. This Rowling is most likely going to be Kalan's principal wife."

Linley was stunned.

Alice... wasn't going to be Kalan's principal wife?

In the Yulan continent, the principal wife held a high status in the household, while the secondary wives held a much lower status.

"Because of me?" Instantly, Linley's emotions grew complicated.

Because of his sculpture, Alice could no longer be Kalan's principal wife.

"Linley, do you intend to go to this engagement ceremony?" Doehring Cowart asked.

"Yes. Of course." Linley's eyes hardened, and then he laughed. "Bernard has invited me several times now. This time, he specially sent over an invitation card. How could I refuse?"

Linley stared up at the blue sky, where wisps of silk-like clouds were floating about.

Long ago, he had sat on the grass alongside Alice and stared up at this sort of blue sky.

June 18th.

According to the priests of the Radiant Church, this was an extremely propitious day. Thus, the Debs clan chose to hold the engagement ceremony on this day.

This day, the front of the Debs clan's manor was jam packed with carriages and people.

Major nobles, wealthy magnates, beautiful noblewomen, dazzling young noble ladies, handsome noble youths... today, it could be said that the Debs clan's manor had more nobles present than any other place in Fenlai City.

"Lord Marquis Linley has arrived!"

The voice of the receiver for the Debs clan shot up two octaves as Linley,

dressed in a black gentleman's outfit, strode into the main hall of the Debs clan.

Virtually all of the nobles within the main hall stopped their conversations and turned to look at Linley.

Linley glanced around the room, a slight smile on his lips. Linley's demeanor was totally in keeping with the magnificent presence of the upper nobility.

"Lord Linley, welcome!"

Bernard, who was previously chatting with some other guests, quickly walked towards Linley's direction. Kalan, who was the leading role for this event, came by as well at Bernard's side.

"Mr. Bernard." Linley smiled. "Congratulations on your son's engagement, to two beautiful women, no less."

"Thank you, thank you," Bernard said warmly.

Kalan also said respectfully, "Lord Linley, welcome to our home. I hope you will enjoy yourself today."

Linley glanced at Kalan, but only nodded. Without speaking to him, Linley looked back at Bernard. "Lord Bernard, please feel free to take care of your other guests. I'll just find a place to stand."



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The main hall of the Debs clan was extremely large. Hundreds of nobles and magnates were within it, but they didn't feel the slightest bit crowded. The rich noblewomen and the rich young noble ladies were all attired beautifully, strutting through the crowd like proud peacocks.

Especially after Linley arrived. Many of the rich young noble ladies 'unconsciously' drew closer to him.

"Lord Linley, you are so amazing. I've trained in stonesculpting for three years now, but I'm not even able to sculpt a basic shape yet," a young noble lady with a head of beautiful brown hair said warmly to Linley. "Lord Linley, you are really so incredible. You are only a bit older than us, but you've already approached

the level of Proulx and Hope Jensen. Lord Linley, can you help teach me?"

This young noble lady looked hopefully at Linley with her big, beautiful eyes.

"Stonesculpting requires sufficient wrist strength. For such soft, beautiful ladies like yourself, it's actually better if you just learned how to paint," Linley said with a superficial smile.

As he spoke, Linley felt helpless.

Perhaps it was because all of these young noble ladies all knew that Linley was not yet married, but they all came to bother Linley, one after another.

And of course, the parents of these young noble ladies were more than happy to just sit and watch.

Because virtually all of the nobles within the Kingdom of Fenlai knew that if someone could become in-laws with Linley, their clan would rise in stature by leaps and bounds!

What sort of a figure was Linley?

He was already the Prime Court Magus, but virtually all of the nobles knew that he was only serving the Kingdom of Fenlai in name. In the future, he would definitely become an important figure within the Radiant Church. In the future, his position might be higher than that of even the ruler of Fenlai!

"Linley." A bright voice rang out.

Linley turned around. "Your Majesty."

The young noble ladies surrounding him all made their curtsies, no longer daring to entangle him. Only now did Linley secretly let out a breath as he headed towards Clayde. When he was alongside the king, at least those young noble ladies wouldn't dare to bother him.

"Linley, see anyone you fancy?" Clayde whispered teasingly into Linley's ears as Linley drew near.

Linley couldn't help but cast a helpless glance at Clayde. "Your Majesty, there's no need to tease me like this, is there?"

"Haha..." Clayde couldn't help but break into a loud laugh.



Suddenly, the entire main hall fell silent. Clayde also turned his head to stare at the door to the main hall, his eyes shining. “Hey. There’s the leading females for tonight.”

Linley turned to look as well.

Kalan was holding a beautiful woman’s hand on each side. Both of these women were wearing beautiful full dresses, while the beautiful adornments in their golden hair shimmered brightly.

One was Rowling. The other was Alice.

“Alice.”

Linley’s gaze rested for a moment on Alice. Alice was more beautifully made up today than she had ever been before. But this time, the person holding her hand was Kalan.

“Oh, my goddess! Isn’t this the ‘goddess’ which Master Linley carved into ‘Awakening From the Dream’?” Suddenly, a noble let out a startled shout.

The main hall was instantly filled with clamorous discussion.

Aside from the few people who already knew what Alice looked like, the vast majority of the people present had no idea what Alice’s appearance was. But they had seen the sculpture, ‘Awakening From the Dream’. Many of the people had even designated the woman within the ‘Awakening From the Dream’ as the goddess of their dreams.

But at this moment, their ‘goddess of their dreams’ suddenly appeared before them at this engagement ceremony.

# 10

## Captured

The main hall of the Debs clan was in an uproar.

“This... this...”

Many nobles were absolutely stunned upon seeing Alice. Linley’s extremely high level of sculpting abilities, unfortunately, was to blame for them to so easily be able to recognize Alice as the inspiration for ‘Awakening From the Dream’.

Linley had already surpassed the level of ‘skill’; through his sculpture, he totally was able to bring out this woman’s charm and mesmerizing qualities. All of these nobles, at the very first glance, were able to be absolutely certain that Alice was the ‘goddess’ of their dreams.

Many nobles looked at Alice, then turned to stare at Linley.

Silence!

All of a sudden, the entire main hall became deafeningly quiet, as though all of the nobles present suddenly understood something, while also understanding that now was not the time to discuss this.

But this silence... made Alice all the more embarrassed and frantic.

From the corner of her eyes, Alice glanced at Linley. Linley, who was standing right next to the king of Fenlai. Still as calm as ever. He was just quietly looking at her.

Towards Linley...

Alice’s emotions towards him were very complex. There was regret. There was hatred. Hatred for the fact that Linley’s sculpture had prevented her from being the principal wife, and also for making her feel so embarrassed now. But at the same time, that sculpture... had also let her truly understand how Linley had felt towards her.

Kalan felt extremely awkward as well.

“Everyone, let me make the introductions.” Bernard’s voice rang out, his face all smiles. “My son Kalan is now becoming formally engaged with Miss Rowling and Miss Alice.”

As he spoke, Bernard walked over to Kalan’s side. Pointing at Rowling, he said, “This is Miss Rowling, the principal wife of my son Kalan. And this is Miss Alice.”

Instantly, the main hall became filled with quiet murmurs. Every so often, someone would sneak a furtive look at Linley.

“Everyone, let’s begin the banquet!” Bernard laughed merrily.

All of the nobles in the main hall entered the banquet area. During the banquet, the members of the Debs clan were extremely friendly and warm to everybody. But nonetheless, there were still many nobles who would continue to glance at Alice, then glance at Linley.

Holding a glass of wine, Linley walked over to a secluded corner of the main hall, casually seating himself in a sofa.

“Boss, I can hear so many people chatting about you.” Bebe leapt onto Linley’s legs.

Linley gently sipped the wine in his glass. “Let them talk if they wish to. I’m fine with it. Only... Alice most likely is suffering.”

Nowadays, towards Alice, Linley’s emotions were calm and peaceful.

Only now did he understand what a huge influence this sculpture, ‘Awakening From the Dream’, had upon Alice’s life.

Seated in that corner, Linley quietly watched as Kalan, Alice, and Rowling moved from table to table, meeting with guests. He quietly drank his wine by himself.

“Lord Linley, why are you here drinking wine all by your lonesome?” A beautiful young lady with jade hair and snow white skin walked over, sitting down quite naturally next to Linley while extending her glass of wine towards him.

Linley clinked glasses with her.

“My name is Sasha. Before the banquet began, I had been hoping I would have a chance to chat with you, Lord Linley. But it seemed as though you attracted quite a lot of attention from the girls. I didn’t have a chance at all.” Sasha laughed.

Linley looked at Sasha.

Sasha was very tall and slender, and her laughter was rich and vibrant. Her eyes also held a bewitching, intoxicating gaze. Compared to those young noble ladies, a female like this had a more feminine charm.

“The girls? Can it be that yourself aren’t a girl, Sasha?” Linley asked with engrossed ‘curiosity’.

Sasha took a light sip of wine, then laughed. “A girl? I’ve been married for eight years now. How could I be a girl?”

Linley couldn’t help but be startled.

“However... my husband died on the day of our wedding.” Sasha glanced at Linley as she spoke in a soft voice.

“Uh...” Linley stared at Sasha in astonishment.

Seeing the look on Linley’s face, Sasha couldn’t help but begin to laugh a charming laugh, and then she raised her glass and had another sip of red wine. Smiling, she said to Linley, “Lord Linley. You really... are too cute.”

Linley couldn’t help but laugh as well.

This Sasha really was an interesting person.

“Sasha. What are you doing here?” Duke Patterson walked over with a laugh.

Sasha glanced back at Duke Patterson. Feigning anger, she said, “Lord Duke, I just started chatting with Lord Linley. Fine, fine. Go ahead and have your talk with him.” As she spoke, she winked at Linley, then left.

Duke Patterson stared at Sasha’s departing silhouette for a moment before sitting down next to Linley.

“Linley, what do you think?” Duke Patterson said to Linley.

“What do I think about what?”

“Sasha, of course.” Duke Patterson looked at Linley suggestively. “Linley, amongst the circle of nobles, Sasha is a beautiful lady who is chased after by many. Look at Sasha’s figure, her eyes, her little mouth. Oh...”

Linley could only laugh.

“Let me tell you, Sasha should be very interested in you. If you seize this opportunity, you should be able to get her into your hands.” Patterson patted Linley on the shoulders.

Linley glanced at Patterson. “Not interested.”

Patterson stared at Linley in surprise.

“Linley.” Patterson lowered his voice as he spoke to Linley. “Tonight, after this banquet is over, don’t leave in a rush. There’s something I wish to discuss with you.”

Linley was startled.

As secretive as that?

“You wouldn’t not give me face, right?” Patterson feigned anger.

Linley glanced at Patterson, musing to himself, “I want to see what you are up to.” Linley rather wanted the chance to get a bit... closer... to Patterson as well.

“Lord Duke, don’t worry. Tonight, I will wait a while for you.” Linley smiled as he replied.

Eight o’clock that night. Many of the nobles had already left, but Linley was in no hurry. He still remembered his appointment with Patterson.

“I want to see what you are up to.”

Linley waited quietly in the main hall.

“Linley, I’ll leave now,” Clayde said to Linley as he left. The people in the main hall grew fewer and fewer. Getting rather impatient, Linley left the main hall, stepping onto the outside balcony to enjoy the cool night wind.

Right at this moment, a manservant quietly walked up to him.

“Lord Linley. The Lord Duke is inviting you for a walk,” the manservant said quietly.

“As secretive as this?” Linley was a bit surprised.

“Lead the way.” On the surface, Linley looked calm. Bebe remained curled up inside Linley’s robes. The manservant led Linley to a very dark, secluded alley. Judging from the appearance of the road, this was a place where people rarely came.

“Where are we going?” Linley said in a low voice.

The manservant said respectfully, “Lord Linley, this is in accordance with the Lord Duke’s instructions. No one is to see you, Lord Linley.”

“Oh?”

Linley furrowed his brows. But Linley wasn’t afraid. He continued to follow the servant forward, as the two of them made their way through the dark, secluded alley, then passed through a small copse of trees. A secret door was opened, and they arrived at a small building.

“So the Debs clan has a place as secretive as this,” Linley said to himself.

Unless someone was capable of flight, it would be quite difficult indeed to spot this hidden little building.

The manservant led Linley directly into the main hall.

“Lord Duke, Lord Linley is here,” the manservant called out respectfully as they reached the main hall’s doorway.

“Haha, Linley is here?” Dressed in a long black robe, Duke Patterson stepped out of the main hall. Seeing Linley, a gleam of excitement appeared in Duke Patterson’s hawk-like eyes, and he hurriedly walked over. “Linley, come in, quick.”

The manservant respectfully said, “Lord Duke, I’ll be leaving then.”

“Yes, you can go,” Patterson said casually.

The manservant respectfully bowed and turned to leave. But then, the smiling Duke Patterson suddenly shot out his right arm at high speed, viciously piercing through the manservant like a knife, from his back to his chest.

“Ah!” The manservant disbelievably turned his head and stared at Duke

Patterson. He totally couldn't understand why the powerful Duke Patterson would stoop to killing someone like him!

Unfortunately, with his heart totally shattered, in just a few seconds, the light fled from his eyes.

"Lord Duke, the meaning of this is...?" Linley, off to the side, still managed to maintain his calm.

Duke Patterson was a warrior of the seventh rank. For him to kill a manservant who was at most a warrior of the first or second rank was indeed very easy.

From within his clothes, Duke Patterson drew out a handkerchief, using it to wipe off the blood from his hand. And then, he casually tossed it on the ground.

"Linley. It's nothing. I just didn't want anyone to know that you and I met." Duke Patterson chortled.

Linley looked suspiciously at Duke Patterson. "You don't want anyone to know?"

Duke Patterson nodded confidently. "Don't worry at all. This secret meeting place was arranged by Bernard per my instructions. Bernard only knows that I'll use this place, but he doesn't know who I meet with. The only servant who knows that we have met is dead now. Thus, no one will know that we have met."

Linley made up his mind. He stepped into the main hall.

"Duke Patterson. This matter seems to be quite important." Linley smiled at Duke Patterson.

Patterson nodded. "Of course. And, I have arranged for a decoy as well. In the eyes of others, I have returned to my estate long ago. Aside from Bernard and my housekeeper, I'm afraid you are the only one who knows I am here."

"A decoy?"

"Duke Patterson, what exactly do you intend to do, for you to meet with me here so secretively?" Linley asked with some curiosity.

Duke Patterson looked around the area, then closed the door to the main

hall.

“Come. Let’s chat inside.” Pulling Linley by the hand, Duke Patterson headed for a room within the main hall. After entering the room, Duke Patterson activated a mechanism. With a grinding sound, the stone wall began to move, revealing a stone passageway.

So within this secret little building, there was a secret underground room as well.

“Linley. Come in.” Patterson smiled at Linley.

Linley nodded and stepped inside.

The inside of the underground room was pitch dark. Patterson lit three candles, then turned to smile at Linley.

“There’s nothing for it. Neither my Duke’s manor nor your own manor is suitable. There are too many spies in both places. It’s not safe.” Duke Patterson let out a long breath.

Linley also knew that his manor was under constant surveillance from the Radiant Church as well as Clayde.

Because this manor was gifted to him by Clayde. The servants belonged to Clayde as well. It was quite normal for the place to be filled with Clayde’s spies. At the same time, his guard corps belonged to the Radiant Church. Frankly speaking, Linley’s actions within his manor was under the constant, watchful eye of these two parties.

“Duke Patterson. Today, the topic of our conversation seems to be quite important. Go ahead, tell me what this is all about.” Linley smiled.

Patterson withdrew a magicrystal card from his clothes. “Linley. There are ten million gold coins in this card.”

“Ten million gold coins?” Linley waited for Patterson’s explanation.

Patterson said helplessly, “Linley, I’ll tell you the truth. After my elder brother tasked me with the position of Minister of Finance for the kingdom, I have used my authority to accumulate wealth for myself. Up until now, my activities have been hidden perfectly, but this time, the smuggling activity I engaged in with



another clan was simply too large-scale. Based on what my sources tell me, my elder brother... may have already found out.”

Patterson was still holding back, as he did not reveal that the clan in question was the Debs clan.

“The smuggling was on too large a scale? But does this have anything to do with me?” Linley laughed as he looked at Patterson.

Patterson hurriedly said, “Of course this has something to do with you. Although I am King Clayde’s younger brother, I know very well that when he makes his move, he never shows any mercy at all. I must find a path of retreat. After all, over the course of all these years, I have done too many things. Once this affair comes to light, many other affairs will be dug up as well.”

“Thus... I want you to speak on my behalf with young master Yale of the Dawson Conglomerate. I know that you are good friends with Yale.” A hint of a smile appeared on Patterson’s face.

“Yale?” Linley began to understand Patterson’s intentions.

Patterson said helplessly, “In the future, when these events come to pass, there are not many local powers capable of rescuing me from Fenlai City. But the Dawson Conglomerate is definitely one of them. The Kingdom of Fenlai does not dare to offend the Dawson Conglomerate! At the same time, the Radiant Church will not go to loggerheads against the Dawson Conglomerate for the sake of a minor corruption scandal.”

“As long as the Dawson Conglomerate is willing to act, they can easily rescue me. However, I spoke with the Dawson Conglomerate, and they were not willing to offend King Clayde on my behalf.” Patterson looked hopefully at Linley.

“Linley, Yale is the son of the Chairman of the Dawson Conglomerate. His words are extremely influential. What’s more, the Dawson Conglomerate values you quite highly as well. As long as you are willing to help me, there definitely won’t be any problems,” Duke Patterson begged. “If you don’t help me, I most likely am going to die. I beg of you, please help. No one will know that you and I have spoken.”

“As long as you are willing to save me, these ten million gold coins are yours, Linley. I beg you.” Patterson’s words were very sincere. His eyes were filled with hope!

Linley laughed.

“No one will know?” Linley’s smile was incandescent.

“Right. No one will know.” Patterson hurriedly nodded. A look of joy had already appeared in his eyes.

Suddenly, Linley’s body began to transform at a high speed. Black draconic scales began to come out of his body, while a single black horn sprouted out of his forehead. His two hands transformed into draconic claws. His pupils also transformed from their original color to the dark, golden color of the Armored Razorback Wurm.

“You...” Duke Patterson’s face changed. Knowing that something was wrong, he hurriedly roused his own battle-qi, and all of the muscles of his body began to tighten.

“Whoosh!”

Linley’s iron-whip-like tail slashed through the air with a terrifying howl. Given Duke Patterson’s reaction time and speed, he was unable to avoid it, and it landed a vicious blow on his body.

“WHACK!”

Patterson, warrior of the seventh rank, was sent flying. Blood splattered everywhere.

But then in the next instant, that whip-like tail wrapped around Patterson. The sounds of bones clattering could be heard as Patterson’s entire body was bound tightly, preventing him from moving in the slightest. Patterson struggled as much as he could, but his arms were unable to break free from his bonds.

Linley controlled his draconic tail to pull Patterson towards himself.

Linley was now under full Dragonform. His cold, merciless, dark golden eyes stared death directly into Patterson’s eyes. A hint of a cruel smile played about the corners of Linley’s lips. “You say... no one will know? Haha. That’s just

perfect. I've waited so very long for this opportunity."

"You... you..." Patterson had been absolutely scared stupid by this sudden development.

## The Man Behind the Curtain

His entire body was covered in black scales, while sharp black spikes jutted out from his elbows and his knees. His entire back was lined with a row of sharp spikes coming from his spine. And his eyes had turned a dark golden color. Just seeing that cold, dark, golden set of eyes staring at him was enough to terrify Duke Patterson.

“Who are... who are you?” Duke Patterson was so terrified that his face was ashen white. His mouth flapped for a long while before he managed to say these words.

What was this monstrosity in front of him?

“Who am I?” Linley’s cold gaze was fixed on Patterson.

“Squeak, squeak.” The sounds of bones chattering emanated from throughout Patterson’s body, as Linley continued to apply force through his iron-whip-like tail in constricting Patterson. No matter how hard Patterson struggled, he couldn’t budge at all.

Pain began to spread from his arms to the rest of his body.

“You are from another plane?” Patterson’s eyes were filled with terror. From what he could tell, based on Linley’s current appearance, only a different species from another plane could do what Linley had just done. “Linley, I beg you, spare me, spare my life. I definitely will keep your secret, definitely.”

Transfixed by Linley’s dark golden gaze, Patterson had totally lost his equanimity.

“Spare your life?” A hint of a cold smile appeared on Linley’s face. “That’s not impossible. I want to ask you something. Around twelve or thirteen years ago, did you send some people out to kidnap a woman.”

Patterson was startled.

He immediately frantically tried to recollect the affairs of twelve or thirteen years past, but twelve or thirteen years was an extremely long period of time. Most importantly... “Linley, no, Lord Linley, I... I can’t remember,” Patterson said frantically.

“That was a long time ago, and I often would have women I took a fancy to captured and brought to my mansion. I don’t know exactly which one you are talking about.”

That murderous intent in Linley’s heart began to grow.

This Patterson actually often abducted women?

From Linley’s face, Patterson had no idea as to the transformation that was currently occurring in Linley’s heart. Having completely undergone the Dragonform, Linley appeared totally cold and emotionless, terrifying sinister.

“A woman who had just given birth not long beforehand, who had just finished a pilgrimage to the Radiant Temple, and then returned to her hotel.” Linley still stared icily at Patterson. His voice didn’t rise at all.

Hearing Linley say these things, Patterson’s entire body went stiff. And then he stared at Linley in astonishment.

“You remember now?” Linley said coldly.

Of course Patterson remembered now. Throughout all these years, he had only abducted women who had just given birth on two occasions. His memories of those affairs was quite keen. Especially that one time, thirteen years ago. That time, the person whom had instructed him to act had severely warned him to maintain secrecy.

“I really can’t remember,” Patterson said, terrified. “Lord Linley, I beg you, spare me. I really don’t know. You must be mistaken.”

Linley’s dark golden eyes flashed.

“You want to die?” Linley’s voice grew even colder.

“Ahhhh!” Patterson’s screamed in terror as Linley’s tail increased the pressure around him. This greater pressure was causing all of the bones in Patterson’s body to moan in protest.

“Clatter. Clatter.” The sound of bones nearly cracking was enough to make one’s heart shudder.

But Linley still only stared coldly at Patterson.

“Crunch!”

“Ahhhhh!”

The crisp sound of a bone snapping, mixed with the tortured screams of Patterson. His left arm bone had actually been snapped clean by this terrifying pressure.

“Not bad.” Linley’s lips quivered slightly. As though he were smiling.

But Patterson didn’t view it as a smile. Under the Dragonform, the slight curve of Linley’s lips only filled Patterson’s with even more fear.

“You know what matters and what doesn’t. The vast majority of your battle-qi has been used to protect your vital organs. Only a small amount of battle-qi was used to protect your arm. It’s true. A broken arm isn’t a life-threatening condition. But if your organs were to rupture, then you really will lose your life.” Linley’s voice was very calm.

Patterson felt his throat go dry.

He had never imagined that Linley would have such a terrifying side.

“Now, do you remember yet?” Linley asked again.

Patterson really wanted to answer him, but when he thought about the punishment which would await him if he spoke, he couldn’t help but shudder. His face growing still more pitiful, he cried out miserably, “Lord Linley, I beg of you, don’t torture me. I really don’t know. Even if you kill me, I still don’t know.”

Patterson firmly believed that, with this affair having been over thirteen years ago and Linley being so young, there was no way Linley could be certain about what had happened.

Most likely, Linley had received some sketchy details and was not absolutely certain. As long as he clenched his teeth and refused to speak, perhaps Linley would believe him in the end.

“Lord Linley, if I knew, I would’ve told you long ago, and avoided all this suffering. Lord Linley, I beg of you, please investigate this matter clearly.” Tears began to pour out of Patterson’s eyes, and his face was a picture of sincerity. If it weren’t for the fact that Linley had read that letter from his father, he might really have hesitated.

Staring at Patterson, Linley’s lips began to curve upwards even more.

Patterson’s heart felt a sudden chill.

“Good. Wonderful.” Linley’s tail was still wrapped around Patterson. Suddenly, the draconic tail sent Patterson smashing directly, viciously into the stone floor. Fortunately, though, Linley smashed Patterson feet-first, rather than head-first.

Linley gave full reign to the power of his draconic tail!

Patterson’s two legs smashed against the stone floor.

“Crush!”

The sound of bones splintering instantly, mixed with Patterson’s terrifying, high-pitched howls of agony.

On Patterson’s left knee, the shattered white bone was visible to the eye, piercing both through his leg and his pants. His right leg, even worse off, simply lay limply on the ground, while blood stained his pants around the ankles in particular.

“Ahhh! Ahhhh! Ahhhh!” Patterson was screaming nonstop.

This level of pain was killing him. Fortunately, though, his organs had been protected by his battle-qi, and so his life was not yet in danger.

“Demon. Demon.” Patterson was cursing nonstop in his heart. He knew what a tremendous force Linley was using. Based on his strength as a warrior of the seventh rank, he was only just barely able to protect his internal organs with his battle-qi, and couldn’t protect the rest of his body.

Patterson didn’t want to die.

Crippled legs?

Not a problem. With enough money, he definitely could invite an Arch Magus of the ninth-rank of the Radiant Church to use the 'Song of Life' on him. As long as he didn't already die, any wound, no matter how serious, could be healed!

"Do you remember yet? That woman you abducted?" Linley's voice was still very calm, not rising in the slightest.

But the terror in Patterson's heart was growing.

"I remember. I remember." Beads of sweat were flowing down Patterson's face. Not from pain. From fear.

Patterson knew very well that in this sealed underground room in which he and Linley were currently in, nobody outside could hear anything, no matter how loud the screams. Perhaps someone directly outside, leaning against the stone door, could just barely hear something.

But who would be outside of this secret little room, pressing their ears against the stone door?

No matter how loud he screamed, no one would know.

"If you said so earlier, wouldn't you have suffered less?" Linley's dark golden eyes stared peacefully at Patterson. "Speak, then. Explain what happened to me."

Patterson hurriedly nodded. "Lord Linley, that year, that woman was extremely beautiful. I was bewitched, and hatched an evil plot to abduct that woman and bring her back to my place. I wanted that woman to sleep with me, but she was too headstrong. She committed suicide by ramming her head against the stone wall."

Stuttering as he spoke, Patterson looked at Linley.

In Patterson's opinion, there were very few people who knew what had really happened to that woman. Linley shouldn't have had any clue.

"You continue to lie!!!"

Linley finally grew angry. Those dark golden eyes seemed to slowly turn red. Using his draconic tail, Linley brought Patterson directly before him. Linley all but pressed his face directly against Patterson's, coldly staring into his eyes.



Pressed against Linley, seeing Linley's black scales and the black horn on his forehead, Patterson grew even more terrified.

"I'm not lying! I'm not lying!" Patterson hurriedly said.

Linley's hands, already transformed into claws by the Dragonform, suddenly delivered a mighty slap to Patterson's face.

"THWACK!" Five pieces of flesh were ripped from Patterson's face, and blood began to flow out in a steady stream. Fortunately, Linley wasn't trying to kill him. Otherwise, he would've crushed Patterson's brain to a pulp with this blow.

"Sob... sob... sob..." Patterson was in so much pain that his voice changed.

Linley stared coldly at Patterson. "Patterson, listen closely. I already know very much about what had happened, which is why it's best for you not to lie to me. Otherwise, the torment you will suffer definitely will not be limited to just this. Let me tell you this. The woman that you abducted was my mother!"

"Mother?" Patterson was stunned, even forgetting his pain for the moment.

"I am very clear about what happened that day with my mother, and I have been investigating this entire time. Thus, it's best if you tell me everything about what happened to my mother. Otherwise... you will definitely die." Linley's voice grew even more freezing.

Actually, no matter what Patterson said, he was still definitely going to die.

Because Linley's father had been pursued and heavily injured by Patterson's men, and had died as a result. Patterson didn't yet know that the person he had sent people out to hunt and kill was Linley's father. If he had known... perhaps Patterson would be reacting in a totally different way.

"Tell me. Who did you give my mother to?" Linley stared at Patterson.

"You knew?" Patterson's face turned pale.

Linley actually knew that he had given the woman away to someone else?

"Tell me his name, but you'd best not lie to me. If I discover that you have lied to me, I will make your life worse than death." Linley's voice was very calm again, not rising in the slightest.

Patterson hesitated for a moment.

“There’s no use for me to tell you. You can’t kill him,” Patterson said in a low voice.

“Can’t kill him?” Linley stared coldly at Patterson. “Patterson, listen to me. All you have to do is tell me who that person is. As for whether or not I can kill him, that’s none of your concern. Do you think you know what my real level of ability is?”

Hearing these words, Patterson secretly agreed.

The ‘Linley’ in front of him was too terrifying. The power he had previously displayed had already made others believe he was an absolute genius. But apparently, Linley’s real power was far greater than that of a warrior of the seventh rank. In front of Linley, he didn’t have the slightest ability to resist.

Patterson began to furiously calculate in his mind.

Linley didn’t rush him, only fixing Patterson with his dark golden gaze.

After pondering a long time, Patterson gritted his teeth and looked at Linley. “Linley, I’ll tell you who he is, but you have to guarantee that you definitely won’t let anyone know that I was the one who told you! And, you have to promise you won’t kill me.”

Linley’s face was still as cold as ever. “Fine. I guarantee that I will not tell anyone that you were the one to tell me. And, I guarantee I will not kill you.”

Only now did Patterson secretly let out his breath.

“About twelve years ago, on one occasion, we members of the royal clan of Fenlai went to pay a visit to the Radiant Temple. Within the Radiant Temple, we saw your mother. Afterwards, I sent people to abduct your mother,” Patterson immediately said, “But that wasn’t actually my own intent. I was obeying the orders of another.”

“Who?” Linley asked.

Patterson glanced at Linley. He slowly said, “The orders came from my elder brother. The current ruler of the Kingdom of Fenlai. King Clayde.”

“Clayde?” Linley was startled.

The pride of the Kingdom of Fenlai, the 'Golden Lion', Clayde? The warrior of the ninth rank, Clayde?

"Yes. It was Clayde," Patterson said with certainty. "But I know that Clayde valued your mother highly. He even told me that no matter what, I couldn't let this information out, as if I did, I would definitely die."

Linley looked at Patterson.

"He should be telling the truth," Doehring Cowart's voice rang out in Linley's mind. "I can sense the vibrations of his soul."

Linley made up his mind.

Patterson looked beseechingly at Linley. "Linley, can you spare my life? I guarantee that I definitely won't say a single word about what happened today to anyone." Patterson's eyes were filled with hope.

"Fine. I'll keep my promise." Linley's draconic tail loosened.

Patterson's body dropped to the floor. A look of wild joy appeared on Patterson's face, and he looked at Linley with eyes filled with gratitude.

Right at this moment, a black blur flashed by.

"Crunch."

The little Shadowmouse, Bebe, bit Patterson's neck. Patterson stared with terror at Bebe. He had just escaped from death's door, but now, he could already seem to feel the call of the Netherworld. Patterson could tell that the little Shadowmouse was the one which was always on Linley's shoulders.

Disbelievingly, Patterson stared at Linley.

"I said I wouldn't kill you. But I never said my magical beast wouldn't kill you." Linley looked coldly at Patterson, whose throat was spurting out blood. "Let me tell you something else as well. Several months ago, there was a man who snuck into your Duke's mansion. Afterwards, you sent people after him to kill him. And that man... was my father!"

# 12

## The Investigation

Just before his death, Patterson finally understood.

He had, after all, participated in Linley's father's funeral. He knew that Linley's father was already dead.

The funny thing was, just now, he had been hoping that he could leave with his life. But now, he completely understood why Linley had done what he had done. Deep in Patterson's heart, he was unwilling to be resigned to dying like this. Based on his prowess as a warrior of the seventh rank, it wouldn't be too hard to live for another two or three hundred years.

His life should still be long.

"I'm dying, but Clayde, your life won't be much better." As Patterson's soul was drawn to the Netherworld, it contained a thread of hatred, hatred for his brother Clayde.



\*

After watching Patterson die, Linley returned to his normal form.

"Clayde. So the man behind this event was Clayde." Linley frowned deeply.

Clayde himself was a combatant of the ninth rank. Even if Linley was in full Dragonform, he would be at most an early eighth rank combatant.

Clayde was on a totally different level compared to him. Even if Linley were to ambush him, he simply could not harm a warrior of the ninth rank. The gap between them was too great.

And Clayde had tremendous power at his disposal as well.

As the revered ruler of Fenlai, how could he not have many fighters under his

banner? And, having been the ruler for many years of the Kingdom of Fenlai, the leading kingdom amongst the six kingdoms of the Holy Union, he had a very close relationship with the Radiant Church. His roots were extremely deep.

In terms of both strength as well as forces available, Linley could not compare to Clayde.

“Perhaps my only advantage right now is that I am operating hidden in the shadows.” Linley constantly pondered how to deal with Clayde.

Doehring Cowart appeared from within the Coiling Dragon ring. He immediately urged Linley, “Linley, don’t waste any more time here. What you need to do right now is to destroy anything that might reveal you were here. Get back to your own estate immediately, otherwise, if you return too late, when they begin investigating who killed Patterson, they might suspect you.”

Linley was startled awake.

Right!

His only advantage was that he was operating from within the shadows. No matter what, he couldn’t allow Clayde to be on guard against him.

“Time to burn the evidence to ashes.” Linley immediately generated several dozen fireballs which surrounded Patterson’s body. Based on his current spiritual energy, the temperature of his fireballs was quite high.

Patterson’s body quickly began to burn, while at the same time, an extremely foul odor began to fill the air. After a while, only a few charred yellow bones and ashes remained.

That foul odor made Linley frown.

“Linley, your clothes,” Doehring Cowart reminded.

Linley looked down at his clothes. Indeed. After having gone through the Dragonform transformation, his clothes had been totally ripped apart. Linley retrieved his things, and then removed his outer jacket and pants without the slightest hesitation. Instantly, he burnt his clothes to ashes as well.

Linley immediately activated the mechanism.

“Rumble rumble.” The stone door once more opened, and Linley hurriedly

walked out, then closed the door again.

No matter what, it was best for the stone door to be closed. Otherwise, with the door open, that smell of burnt flesh would quickly draw people's attention.

"There should be clothes within this room." Linley glanced down at his underwear. Clearly, he couldn't walk out just in his ruined underwear like this. That would definitely arouse suspicion. Linley immediately went to another room on the side, opening up a dresser.

The dresser was filled with sets of clothes.

Linley selected a set of black clothes, rather similar to the outfit he had worn to the engagement ceremony. Putting the clothes on, Linley then once more used his wind spells to blow away the nearby specks of blood as well as that foul odor of burning flesh.

"Best to go back early. Can't let anyone notice anything." Moving at high speed, Linley leapt straight through the courtyard, arriving at the front courtyard in a matter of minutes.

At this point in time, there were still a few nobles remaining, engaging in idle conversation.

"Oh, Lord Linley. You haven't left yet?" Count Juneau was heading out as well. Seeing Linley not too far away, he warmly greeted Linley.

Linley smiled. "Right. Just then, my stomach felt a bit queasy, so I went to the privy."

Count Juneau walked out shoulder-to-shoulder with Linley.

"Lord Linley, I must say that I am a big fan of your sculptures. I was the one who bought the first three sculptures that you exhibited at the main hall of the Proulx Gallery," Count Juneau said proudly to Linley. The thing which Count Juneau was proudest of was most likely the fact that he had been the one to purchase the first three sculptures which Linley had put on display.

Those three sculptures of Linley's, just judging from the outside, was perhaps only worth six or seven thousand gold coins.

However... Linley's status was now very different. He was the master sculptor

who had carved 'Awakening From the Dream'. In terms of status, he wasn't too much off from the levels of Proulx and Hope Jensen. How could the price of the very first three sculptures of a person such as him be exhibited this low?

Based on his calculations and the implicit value, these three sculptures which Count Juneau had collected were most likely each worth at least a hundred thousand gold coins!

This was perhaps the collection which Count Juneau was the most delighted over, ever. Count Juneau had decided that these three items needed to be kept in his collection. He believed... as Linley's future accomplishments became greater and greater, the value of these three sculptures would rise as well.

"Lord Linley, have a safe trip," the housekeeper for the Debs clan said respectfully at the gate for the Deb's clan's manor.

Linley nodded. Bidding farewell to Count Juneau, he entered his own carriage.

"Go back." Linley gave a calm command upon entering the carriage.

"Yes, milord."

The Radiant Church warrior of the seventh rank who served as a driver bowed in acknowledgment, then immediately began driving the carriage towards Linley's manor.

"I probably spent around fifteen minutes or so with Patterson." Linley took out his pocket watch and took a glance.

This was one of the gifts that the many well-wishers of his had sent him upon him being conferred the rank of Marquis.

"Fifteen minutes or so. Count Juneau and the rest were amongst the last pack of guests to leave. If they don't investigate extremely carefully, it shouldn't be possible for them to suspect me," Linley said to himself. "The other problem is, Patterson said that his housekeeper knew that he was going to meet with someone, but not exactly who."

Linley frowned. "But I can't totally trust his words. Perhaps his housekeeper did in fact know he was going to meet me, but Patterson wanted me to relax and trust him and thus claimed no one else knew."

Linley had considered this possibility.

Patterson's housekeeper!

This definitely was a flaw.

What's more... if there really was an investigation, people might discover that Linley had disappeared for fifteen minutes at the end. But during that period of time, all the nobles were engaged in casual conversation and were leaving haphazardly. It would most likely be extremely difficult to clearly investigate a single person, given those circumstances.

"At least no one personally witnessed my meeting with Patterson. The one attendant who did see was killed by Patterson," Linley said to himself.

At most, others might suspect him. But there was no actionable evidence against him.

"Boss, what are you thinking about?" Bebe was lying on Linley's legs. Raising his little head, he looked at Linley.

"Nothing." Linley rubbed Bebe's little head, having totally calmed down.

"Milord, we have arrived."

Linley pushed open the carriage curtains, then raised his head and stared up at the boundless sky. Right now, the night sky was filled with stars. Linley couldn't help but feel a carefree joy in his heart, while at the same time, his resolve to kill Clayde grew still more firm. "Patterson died today. Next one up is Clayde."

Patterson had disappeared for a day or two. Aside from Patterson's housekeeper, no one noticed that something was amiss.

Within the Debs clan's manor, there was only Bernard and a jade-haired middle-aged person.

"Bernard, on the night of Kalan's engagement, did the Lord Duke depart from your manor?" The jade-haired middle-aged man asked. This man was Duke Patterson's housekeeper, named Lodi.

Bernard was forced to hold in his aggrieved feelings and refrain from saying, "Your Duke disappeared, and you are asking ME about it?" That night,



Patterson hadn't even told Bernard whom he was going to meet, nor did he say a word when he left. How would he, Bernard, know anything?

"The Lord Duke left. The Lord Duke is not in my manor," Bernard replied directly.

The very day after the engagement ceremony, Bernard had sent someone over to dispose of the servant's corpse. His servants didn't find any trace of Patterson within that small building.

"Oh." Lodi frowned, then stared at Bernard. "Bernard, if you find any trace of my Duke, you must let me know immediately. This affair might be minor, or it might be major. If it becomes a major affair, even the smuggling affairs of your Debs clan might come to light."

Bernard's face changed.

"Alright, I'll go back now." Lodi left with a heavy mind.

Seeing Lodi's departing back, Bernard felt somewhat unsettled, and made the decision to immediately go visit that building which Patterson had used.

Within that secretive building inside the Debs clan's estate.

Bernard had entered alone. The corpse of that dead servant had long since been removed and disposed of by the people Bernard had sent. Looking at the building, Bernard frowned. "Duke Patterson said he was going to meet with a guest, but in the end, he didn't return home. Could it be..."

Bernard suddenly thought of one possibility.

Very few people even in the Debs clan knew about the secret underground room. Naturally, those people he had sent to dispose of the corpse wouldn't know either, nor would they go investigate.

But Bernard had told Duke Patterson of the secret underground room. He had also told the Duke that there was definitely no one who could eavesdrop on any conversations within.

"Impossible. There's no way something like that could've happened." Bernard hurriedly ran into the main hall, then directly went to the mechanism and activated it.

“Rumble, rumble.”

That wall-like ‘stone door’ slowly opened, while at the same time, a foul, bloody odor that smelt like burnt flesh wafted out.

The look on Bernard’s face grew ugly.

Hurriedly walking into the secret room, he saw that on the granite floor, there were still traces of blood and scratches. To the side, there was a pile of charred human bones as well as ashes.

“Someone died here.” Bernard was absolutely certain.

And then, the person who died had been burnt to ashes. But there was no way for Bernard to tell who it was for certain.

“Ring!” Bernard suddenly saw within the pile of ashes a dirty, grayish-silver ring. Upon seeing the ring, Bernard felt that it looked extremely similar to the ring which Duke Patterson liked to wear.

Instantly, all the blood fled from Bernard’s face.

“Patterson is most likely dead.” Bernard’s thoughts were a chaotic mess.

The Debs clan had spent over half of their capital and a large amount of manpower in order to carry out this water jade smuggling operation with Duke Patterson’s help. This was an extremely important business operation for the Debs clan. But if the smuggling became exposed... it wouldn’t just be a problem of losing money. Most likely, the entire Debs clan would be exterminated by the furious King Clayde!

The entire Debs clan... was quite possibly finished.

“No, not possible. Duke Patterson was a warrior of the seventh rank. How could he die so easily? Given his careful personality, there is no way that he would meet in private with someone who was more powerful than him.” Bernard couldn’t accept what he was seeing.

It was true. Patterson was an extremely cautious man. Sadly, Patterson didn’t have an accurate understanding of Linley’s power.



\*

The entire City of Fenlai was peaceful. Linley continued to train quietly at his manor every day. But then, after Duke Patterson had disappeared for half a month, the previously calm and sedate King Clayde finally began to issue orders. The first step was to capture the Duke's housekeeper, Lodi. The next was to investigate the Duke's whereabouts on a wide scale.

Within the main hall of Linley's manor.

"Lord Linley, per his Majesty's decree, he would like Lord Linley to pay a visit to the palace."

Staring at the royal decree brought by the palace attendant, Linley felt a bit unsettled. Why was King Clayde summoning him?

"Please wait a moment. Allow me to change my clothes, and I'll head to the palace immediately afterwards." Linley smiled as he replied.

# 13

## Secrets Exposed

The night was pitch-dark.

The sound of the carriage could be heard on the quiet road leading to the palace. Linley was sitting alone in the carriage, with Bebe on his legs. Next to the carriage, there were over ten knights on fine stallions, and leading them was the palace servant who had come.

Within the carriage.

Linley was frowning as he considered. "It's quite late already. But King Clayde suddenly summoned me to his palace. What is this about?" As the saying goes, only those who were blameless would always be relaxed.

Linley had just killed Patterson, and now he was very much aware that in the past, it was Clayde who had instructed Patterson to send people to abduct his mother. In other words, there was a deep enmity between him and Clayde.

Naturally, Linley was very careful around Clayde.

"I heard two days ago, Clayde seized the housekeeper of the Duke's manor, and has begun a wide scale investigation of Patterson's affairs. Patterson said that he hadn't told anyone about his meeting with me. But can I trust those words?" Linley felt uncertain.

Perhaps that housekeeper already knew about Patterson and Linley's meeting.

If that Duke's housekeeper informed King Clayde of the meeting, then naturally, Linley would be at the precipice of danger.

"Linley, don't worry."

Doehring Cowart's voice rang out in Linley's mind, reassuring him. "Linley, even if that Duke Patterson told his housekeeper that he was meeting with you, you would still be fine."

“Fine?” Linley looked questioningly at Doehring Cowart.

Doehring Cowart nodded confidently. “Naturally. Even if Clayde guessed that you killed Patterson, he still won’t openly address it.”

“Because... Clayde doesn’t know the reason why you killed Patterson.” Doehring Cowart’s face was filled with confidence.

Linley was startled. Even if Clayde didn’t know why he killed Patterson... he still would know Linley was the killer, right?

“It’s simple. Judging from the conversation you had with Patterson in that underground room, his relationship with Clayde wasn’t very good. While he was the Minister of Finance, Patterson engaged in widespread corruption. In his heart, Clayde probably didn’t feel much affection for Patterson. What’s more... Clayde doesn’t know that there is enmity between the two of you. Thus, he won’t act against you without cause. Because if he wishes to punish you, or to kill you, he would have to first get permission from the Radiant Church.” His eyes gleaming, Doehring Cowart looked at Linley.

“Hrmph, can that Clayde really be considered a king? The Radiant Church has the authority to depose him from his rule. But you are someone whom the Radiant Church values highly. Would he dare to casually act against you?” Doehring Cowart consoled Linley.

Linley nodded.

He understood this logic.

However...

Linley truly did not wish for Clayde to be on his guard against him. If Clayde became wary of Linley, how would Linley investigate his mother’s whereabouts or take revenge on behalf of his mother?

“Open the door! It’s me!” The palace attendant shouted in a shrill voice.

Hearing this, Linley immediately knew that they had already reached the palace gates. Like a giant beast, the gates squatted there, hulking. In just half an hour’s time, countless carriages had entered and left the palace.

One of those carriages was Linley’s. Another belonged to Bernard. And still

others were carrying other nobles.

Within the business discussion hall of the palace.

Aside from the two guards standing at the door to the hall, everyone else present in the hall were nobles of high rank. In total, there were eight people present. These were Bernard, leader of the Debs clan. The Prime Court Magus, Linley. The Left Premier, Duke Bonalt. The Inspector General, Hampton...

“Linley, you came.” Bernard greeted him warmly.

All of the nobles already present instantly greeted him as well. Seeing all of these nobles, Linley couldn’t help but suddenly feel calm. It seemed that he had not been specially summoned after all.

“Milords, I wonder if any of you know why his Majesty has summoned us?” Linley immediately asked.

Duke Bonalt, as the Left Premier, knew a great deal of information.

“Most likely, this summons is related to the disappearance of Duke Patterson,” Duke Bonalt replied with a warm laugh.

Bernard, off to the side, immediately asked, “Lord Duke, what does Duke Patterson’s disappearance have to do with me? I don’t have any important responsibilities at court.”

“Today, his Majesty isn’t summoning his entire court, merely investigating a matter. Otherwise, why would I be here, but not the Right Premier, and only a single Inspector General?” Duke Bonalt saw things quite clearly.

Bernard nodded.

But Bernard still felt very uneasy.

Ever since Patterson had disappeared, Bernard had been filled with unease. He feared that the involvement between his Debs clan and Duke Patterson in the water jade smuggling operation would be brought to light. If this affair was revealed, then the Debs clan would really be finished.

“His Majesty has arrived!”

Suddenly, the shrill voice of the palace attendant sounded out. From a side

door to the hall, Clayde walked in, heading directly for a seat in front and sitting down, two palace attendants respectfully at his side.

“All hail his Majesty!”

All of the nobles present bowed and chanted.

Clayde glanced at the nobles. He calmly nodded, then said, “It’s quite late at night already. I originally didn’t wish to disturb all of you, but this issue regarding the disappearance of my second brother, Patterson, is too important. I was forced to summon all of you to come here.”

“Might I ask, your Majesty, what Duke Patterson’s disappearance has to do with your summons for us?” Linley immediately asked.

Of the eight people present before Clayde, perhaps only Linley would dare to speak to him in such a manner. Because while everyone else present was subordinate to Clayde, in reality, Linley was the subordinate of the Radiant Church, and was only a servant of the Kingdom of Fenlai in name.

“Linley, I just wish to clearly investigate this affair.” Clayde smiled, and then said in a loud voice, “Bring out the Duke’s housekeeper, Lodi.”

Lodi? The Duke’s housekeeper?

Both Linley and the Deb clan’s leader Bernard felt their hearts start to pound.

The entire meeting hall was silent. Everyone quietly awaited Lodi being brought forward to testify. Linley still stood there, with the Shadowmouse Bebe on his shoulders.

After a short while...

Under escort by palace guards, a middle-aged man with jade-like hair walked in. This man looked very fragile, with mussed hair and a bewildered look on his face.

Bernard recognized this man at a single glance. This man in front of him was indeed Lodi, the housekeeper for Duke Patterson.

“Lodi, explain everything in detail,” Clayde shouted towards Lodi.

Lodi clearly had already explained once to Clayde already. This explanation

clearly was for the benefit of Linley and the others. Lodi said very honestly, “Your Majesty, on June 18th, when the Debs clan held that engagement ceremony, the Lord Duke also went to attend. But after the ceremony, the Lord Duke never came back.”

“Lodi, stand to one side,” Clayde said coldly.

“Yes, your Majesty.” Lodi clearly was terrified. He hurriedly scurried off into a corner.

Clayde swept the eight nobles with his gaze.

“Based on the information from my investigations, the night of the engagement ceremony at the Debs clan, you all were amongst the last to leave. What I want to ask is, did any of you encounter Duke Patterson?” Clayde’s question was very simple.

“Right after the banquet, Patterson departed,” the Left Premier, Lord Bonalt, said in a loud voice.

Linley nodded as well. “I, too, saw Patterson departing quite early.”

The others either said they didn’t see him, or that Patterson left very early.

Hearing everyone speak, Clayde smiled and nodded, and then turned to Lodi again. “Lodi, continue.”

“Yes,” Lodi continued. “That night, before going to the Debs manor, Duke Patterson told me that he was going to be meeting with an extremely important person, but to the importance of the discussion topic, nobody could know about it. Thus, he ordered me to arrange for a double to impersonate him and leave the manor. In truth, the Lord Duke would remain within the manor.”

“The Lord Duke also said that the Debs clan would arrange for a safe, secret place for his meeting.” Lodi added.

Upon hearing these words, Bernard Debs’ face immediately turned white.

“Your Majesty! Your Majesty!”

Bernard hurriedly said, “This has nothing to do with me. The Lord Duke told me he wanted to meet with someone, so I arranged a meeting room for them. I couldn’t refuse him.”



“Bernard. Don’t be hasty. I won’t wrongly blame someone.” Clayde smiled.

“Thank you, your Majesty.” Bernard quickly stepped back, but his face was still pale.

Clayde turned to look at Linley and the others. “If Patterson was going to meet with someone, the person he was going to meet with should have some status. Who would that person be? I think... it must have been one of the last guests to leave.”

Linley’s heart trembled.

Duke Bonalt, Count Juneau, Marquis Hampton, and the others all stared at Clayde in astonishment. By now, they could guess why the king had called them here.

His Majesty was suspicious of them!

“Your Majesty, I definitely did not meet with him,” Count Juneau, Marquis Hampton, and the others hurriedly said.

Clayde smiled. “I only have my suspicions. If none of you did anything to be guilty of, why be so nervous? Look, Linley’s the calmest one here.”

Linley smiled but didn’t make a sound.

Clayde glanced at this group of people, laughing coldly in his heart. “I couldn’t give a damn about who made Patterson disappear. In fact, I’d rather thank that person for giving me such a wonderful opportunity to eradicate all the secret connections Patterson has built up.”

As the long-time Minister of Finance, Patterson had erected an enormous, dense web of connections. His influence was extremely large. Clayde didn’t dare to casually investigate Patterson either, as he didn’t want to cause too many problems in the kingdom.

This was also the reason why the Debs clan had decided to work alongside Patterson.

But now, Patterson had disappeared. The group of dragons no longer had a leader.

Acting as fast as lightning, Clayde used various ruthless techniques to quickly

clip off Patterson's wings and shatter the web of influence which Patterson had spent so long building up.

Without Patterson's guidance, those collaborators of his naturally would be in for a terrible time if they resisted. There was no way they could resist the pressure exerted by King Clayde.

Clayde looked at Linley and the others. Laughing, he said, "The disappearance of my second brother, Patterson, is something I must look into. But what surprised me was, I ended up discovering quite a few things. Lodi, in particular, spilled many secrets."

Linley couldn't help but look at Lodi.

"Lodi, tell them." Clayde smiled at Lodi.

Right now, Clayde was feeling extremely satisfied. The death of a brother, to Clayde, was no big deal at all. More importantly... all of the power within the Kingdom of Fenlai finally rested with him again.

Lodi respectfully said, "Your Majesty, that day, when Duke Patterson attended the engagement ceremony at the Debs clan, the reason he needed to meet with that mysterious person was that he wanted to start a relationship with the Dawson Conglomerate. Thus... the person he went to see absolutely has to have some sort of connection to the Dawson Conglomerate.

"The Dawson Conglomerate?"

Linley felt his heart shudder violently.

"Does everyone want to know why it was that my second brother wished to start a relationship with the Dawson Conglomerate?" Clayde laughed as he looked at the people present. "Lodi, continue."

"Yes." Lodi clearly had been totally cowed by Clayde, saying whatever he was told to. "Over these years, Duke Patterson had betrayed his country in many ways for his own profit and for his own selfish motives. In these past few months in particular, he initiated a large-scale water-jade smuggling program with the Debs clan. In the entire history of our kingdom, this is the largest water-jade program that has ever existed."

“Smash!”

The leader of the Debs clan, Bernard, immediately knelt down, his knees smashing into the ground. He hurriedly said, “Your Majesty, I am being framed! Our Debs clan has always operated our businesses in an open, aboveboard manner. We’ve never acted in a way which was against the best interests of the kingdom. Our Debs clan is being framed!”

“Framed?” Clayde flicked a cold glance at Bernard.

“Bring in the Lanseer brothers!”

Upon hearing the words ‘Lanseer brothers’, the face of Bernard, clan leader of the Debs clan, lost all blood.

## Imprisoned

For the sake of this water jade smuggling operation, the Debs clan had paid a very high price. Bernard ordered his Third Brother to be responsible for this affair, and the Lanseer brothers were his Third Brother's right and left hand men.

Standing in the middle of the meeting hall, Linley remained calm. The Shadowmouse, Bebe, also quietly stood on Linley's shoulders.

The man and the magical beast both just stood there as though nothing were happening, quietly watching it all. Even though he saw the begging look Bernard had trained on him, Linley didn't react in the slightest.

After a while...

The sound of heavy chains could be heard. Two golden-haired men in shackles entered the meeting hall, under escort from the palace guards. These two men were shackled by the feet and by the hands as well. Just judging from the thickness of those leg-irons, the shackles must have been one or two hundred pounds heavy.

Such heavy shackles were used expressly for collaring those warriors with powerful strength.

"Milord clan leader."

Upon entering the discussion hall and seeing Bernard who was kneeling on the ground, strange smiles appeared on their faces. They actually called out to Bernard respectfully.

Standing to the side, Linley understood.

Most likely these Lanseer brothers were two of the major leaders in the smuggling operation who most likely had some secret connection with the Debs clan.

“The Debs clan is going to be in trouble now.” Linley just quietly watched.

Seeing those two shackled golden-haired men, Bernard reacted with confusion. “Uh? Lanseer and Langmuir, why have the two of you been imprisoned by his Majesty? Didn’t I give the two of you a one hundred thousand gold coins a few months ago and tell you to go enjoy life?”

Those two golden-haired men were briefly startled, then they laughed.

“Milord clan leader, are you jesting?” Lanseer laughed.

Next to him, Langmuir snickered as well. “What, lord clan leader, do you still think that you can lie and hide? Forget it. You might as well admit your guilt.”

A look of rage appeared on Bernard’s face. He suddenly rose to his feet, staring angrily at Lanseer and Langmuir. “Lanseer, Langmuir, my Debs clan has raised you and cultivated you since you were little. The two of you should know very well how I have treated you.”

“It’s true, you have treated us brothers very well. But the two of us have also risked our lives for the Debs clan for many years now,” the elder brother, Lanseer, said coldly.

Bernard’s rage grew. With a trembling hand, he pointed at the Lanseer brothers. “The two of you truly forget favors and violate justice. True, you two have worked on behalf of the Debs clan for many years now, but all these years, you have been acting corruptly so as to gain money that belonged to the clan. After that event half a year ago, considering that the two of you had worked for us for so long, I spared your lives and even gave you one hundred thousand gold coins and told you to go home and enjoy your lives. But... but you... not only are you not grateful, you’ve now participated in smuggling? And after getting caught, you sully the Debs clan?”

Lanseer and Langmuir were totally caught off-guard, and they stared at Bernard in bewilderment.

“We... we were corrupt? You... you gave us one hundred thousand gold coins?” Lanseer and Langmuir were totally flabbergasted.

Bernard’s rage exploding, he suddenly turned and knelt before Clayde. His tears cascading onto the ground, he said, “Your Majesty, these two are nothing

more than a pair of insatiable wolves. When they were young, I saw that they were two pitiable orphans and so I took them in, and later gave them important positions. But they only acted to shovel my clan's wealth into their own pockets. Despite that, considering the many years of affection between us, I spared their lives and even gave them one hundred thousand gold coins. This can be considered to be extremely benevolent and merciful of me. But now? Now they actually come here to sully and frame my Debs clan. They want to destroy the Debs clan! How vicious! Your Majesty, my heart is broken. My heart is broken!"

Seeing the miserable cries of Bernard, many of the nobles in the meeting hall did indeed begin to wonder if Lanseer and Langmuir really were framing the Debs clan.

"Bernard, you... you..." Lanseer and Langmuir were so enraged that their faces turned red, but they weren't able to say a single word.

How much had these two brothers sacrificed for the Debs clan?

They were even willing to engage in smuggling for the clan, precisely because the two of them didn't fear death. If it weren't for the fact that this time, the offer from King Clayde was simply too enticing, they wouldn't have betrayed the Debs clan.

But everything which Bernard was saying now was false!

"Oh? There's an event such as this?" Clayde glanced at Bernard.

Clayde could sense that Bernard had come prepared, as otherwise, he wouldn't have suddenly come up with all these lies. If he were to investigate, most likely he wouldn't be able to find any flaws.

"Hrmph. It's a pity that Third Brother of Bernard's leapt into the river. We weren't even able to find his corpse. Otherwise, with his Third Brother in front of him, Bernard would have nothing to say." Clayde was furious.

Smuggling water jade.

Water jade mines were part of the national wealth of the kingdom. Which was to say, it was part of Clayde's wealth.

Illegally mining and smuggling water jade meant stealing from him, Clayde. Naturally, Clayde would feel furious.

But that Third Brother of Bernard's had leapt into the river to commit suicide, while Bernard had seemingly been prepared for Lanseer and Langmuir's betrayal.

"Bernard, I won't unjustly accuse an innocent man," Clayde said solemnly.

"Thank you, your Majesty! Thank you, your Majesty!" Bernard's face was covered with tears.

But Clayde announced coldly, "However, I also won't forgive a person who has betrayed the interests of his kingdom. Based on the intelligence that I have, it seems that the person responsible for this smuggling operating was your Third Brother."

"My Third Brother?" Bernard stared questioningly at Clayde.

Clayde stared coldly at Bernard. "What, do you have something to say?"

A wounded look on his face, Bernard said, "Of course I do. Your Majesty, I really don't know why you said what you just said, but over a year ago, my Third Brother left the Kingdom of Fenlai and began on a training excursion tour to various other countries. Just a few days ago, he sent a letter back to us."

Clayde's gaze grew colder.

His men had personally reported that when they were in the process of apprehending Bernard's Third Brother that the man, being heavily wounded, had elected to throw himself into the river. They couldn't find any trace of him.

"Your Majesty! Your Majesty! You must deliver justice!"

Bernard cast a furious glare at Lanseer and Langmuir. "You simply cannot believe the lies of these two despicable men and cast aspersions on the heart of a clan which is loyal to the kingdom."

"Bernard, you! You!" The furious and anxious Lanseer brothers didn't know what to say.

Clayde suddenly rose to his feet, staring coldly at Bernard. "I've already said that I will not unjustly accuse an innocent man, nor forgive a man who has

betrayed the interests of his kingdom. Based on the evidence I have at hand, there is at least a suspicion that your Debs clan has betrayed the kingdom. Guards!”

Bernard’s face instantly changed. “Your Majesty! Your Majesty! I am loyal and faithful to the kingdom!”

Two palace guards rushed into the meeting hall.

“Bernard.” Clayde smiled at Bernard.

Bernard raised his head, looking beseechingly at Clayde, as though he were a child looking at his parents.

“Whether or not your clan is loyal is a question that will only be settled by evidence. I will give you a chance. I will not exterminate your clan right away.”

In his heart, Bernard let out a sigh of relief. What he feared the most was that the Debs clan would instantly be exterminated. “Fortunately, I found those ashes and those remains within the secret room. It gave me the chance to prepare.” Ever since that day, Bernard had been preparing. He had in fact made multiple levels of preparations.

“Guards, deliver Bernard as well as the successor to the Debs clan to the Blackwater Jails. As for this case involving the smuggling operations of the Debs clan, let the Right Premier Merritt investigate,” Clayde ordered.

Immediately, those two guards took Bernard away.

“Your Majesty! I believe in your Majesty’s wisdom!” Bernard called to Clayde, even while being dragged away.

That night, the Greenleaf Road became a very energetic place.

Hoof steps and shouts unabated. Hundreds of knights directly surrounded the Debs clan’s manor, terrifying all of the members of the Debs clan present.

“What are you doing? What are you doing? Do you know what place this is?” Kalan’s second granduncle, the second uncle of Bernard, immediately shouted at those palace guards.

The leader of the knights said coldly, “Do you dare to go against the dictates of his Majesty?”



But this second granduncle only raised his head proudly. “The orders of his Majesty? Who knows if you are falsely claiming that you have an order from his Majesty? Speak! What do you want?”

“Second Granduncle, what’s going on outside?”

By now, many of the members of the Debs clan had rushed over.

Even Alice and Rowling had gotten dressed and rushed over. In the Yulan continent, after the engagement ceremony, the fiancée normally would begin to live with the fiancé. But generally speaking, only after the marriage ceremony would the two of them enter their bridal chambers.

Naturally...

There were cases of people sharing a bedroom prior to the wedding as well, as long as both were willing.

“Big sister Alice, what’s going on outside?” Rowling was holding onto Alice’s hands.

Alice was bewildered as well. “I’m not sure.”

The hundreds of people within the Debs clan’s manor all streamed out, and most of them seemed bewildered. Only the core members of the clan who knew the truth about the smuggling operations began to feel frightened.

This smuggling operation of the Debs clan was an extremely large scale one.

Just to carry out the operation, they had used several tens of millions of gold coins. If they were successful, the profits would be several hundred million gold coins. What the Debs clan’s elders thoughts were, once would be enough.

But it seemed this one operation had proved problematic.

“Big brother Kalan, what’s going on?” Rowling asked Kalan as well.

Kalan shook his head, indicating he didn’t know.

The squad of palace knights had assembled outside the manor. Their leader, the knight-captain, upon seeing so many members of the Debs clan present, withdrew the tablet of command from his clothes, shouting in a bright voice, “His Majesty orders that, as the Debs clan is under suspicion of engaging in the

smuggling of water jade, the leader of the Debs clan as well as his successor are to be immediately jailed within the Blackwater Jails.”

Instantly, the faces of every member of the Debs clan changed.

The faces of those core members of the Debs clan turned even more ashen, even paler. But Alice, Rowling, and those other members of the clan only felt astounded and bewildered.

Several guards stepped forward and grabbed Kalan.

“Take him away!”

The leader of the knights shouted.

At this moment, Kalan felt as though his limbs had gone soft. He allowed those guards to march him towards the gate. But once he reached the gate, he suddenly woke up and, turning his head, frantically called out, “Second Granduncle, Alice, you two have to save me, have to save me!”

Allowing Kalan to shout as much as he wanted, those palace guards emotionlessly escorted him off towards the jails.

Alice, Rowling, and the other members of the Debs clan could only watch as Kalan was taken away, unable to help. Their clan was powerful, true, but how could they resist against the king?

By the next morning, the news that the Debs clan was suspected of having engaged in water jade smuggling had spread across the entire noble circle of Fenlai City. Many of the nobles of Fenlai were paying special attention to this matter.

What’s more, this case was being personally handled by the Right Premier of the Kingdom of Fenlai, Duke Merritt.

Within Duke Merritt’s manor.

Lord Duke Merritt was already over seventy years old, but as a fairly powerful warrior, he looked as though he were only in his middle years. His short golden hair was slick and gleamed.

Right now, Duke Merritt was seated on a chair. He casually flicked a glance at his visitor from the Debs clan - the second granduncle of Kalan, Nimitz.

“Lord Merritt, our clan has definitely been unjustly accused. I hope, lord, that you will be just to our clan.”

As he spoke, Nimitz pulled out a book from his side. “Lord Merritt, I know that you love to collect holy scripts. This holy script was issued by the Radiant Church over three thousand years ago. It’s a rather rare one.”

“Oh, a holy script?”

Merritt casually accepted it, but while flipping through it, Merritt suddenly noticed that stuck within the pages, there was a flat card. A flat card produced by the Golden Bank of the Four Empires. A magicrystal card!

A hint of a smile appeared on Merritt’s face.

Nimitz was carefully observing Merritt’s reactions. Merritt closed the holy script, putting it to the side, then smiled. “Nimitz, you should know that aside from holy scripts, I’m also a big fan of sculptures. A while ago, when I saw that ‘Awakening From the Dream’, I liked it very much. During your clan’s engagement ceremony, I saw that Alice. Oh, she looked so very similar to that person in the sculpture. I wonder... if it would be possible for me to have a private chat with Alice.”

## To Be Wronged

Have a private chat with Alice? Whether or not the Debs clan had engaged in the smuggling of water jade, what use would a private chat with Alice be to make that determination? Clearly, this Merritt had other designs. Nimitz was a person with significant worldly experience. Naturally, he knew exactly what was going on.

Nimitz's eyes narrowed as he stared at Merritt.

But Merritt only casually reclined on his chair, even closing his eyes as he relaxed himself. He didn't even look at Nimitz. Merritt's attitude spoke for itself: If you want your family's 'grievance' to be washed clean, then have Alice come talk to me about it.

Nimitz was quiet for a moment, then laughed. "So Lord Merritt is a fan of Master Linley's 'Awakening From the Dream'. It is understandable if you want to have a chat with Alice. Fine, I'll go back and speak with her."

Upon hearing these words, Merritt opened his eyes, smiling at Nimitz. "Haha, then Nimitz, you can go back now. If Alice is willing to have a good chat with me, I think I will have a better understanding of your Debs clan."

Nimitz immediately stood up, bowing modestly. "Then Lord Merritt, I take my leave. I entrust the affairs of our Debs clan with you."

Merritt nodded slightly.

Nimitz immediately departed.

Leaving behind Duke Merritt, alone in that living room.

Toying with his wine cup, Merritt mumbled in a low voice, "My goddess... Alice..." There was a look of satisfaction and anticipation on his face.

As the Right Premier of the Kingdom of Fenlai, and as a Duke, Merritt had an extremely exalted status. The number of people with a higher status than him

in the Kingdom of Fenlai could be counted on one hand.

A person like him had experienced virtually any sort of woman he wished.

Merritt really was a lecher, despite being in his seventies. Warriors of his level could live to be over three hundred. Right now, he was only in his seventies and in the prime of his life. Merritt publicly had twelve wives to his name, but there was a common viewpoint amongst nobles; one's own wives at home weren't as interesting as having lovers outside, but having lovers outside weren't as interesting as those you couldn't get. Those whom you couldn't get were the best of all.

But given Merritt's status, there were very few women he was unable to get. At the same time, there were very few women who could truly move him.

But Alice was definitely one.

Ever since that sculpture, 'Awakening From the Dream' had become famous, in the hearts of many, the woman of the sculpture had become an untouchable, lofty goddess. For someone of Merritt's stature, naturally he would deeply desire to get a goddess like Alice beneath his thighs. But this was really too difficult.

But now? An opportunity had come.

"Alice. The goddess?" Merritt was unable to repress his smile. Turning his head up, he drained all of the red wine from his glass.

Sitting within his carriage on the way home, Nimitz was frowning deeply.

Alice was Kalan's fiancée!

If he were to ask Alice to get meet privately with Merritt, then he definitely would be essentially pushing Alice into a disaster. In the future, when faced with Kalan's questioning, it wouldn't be a big deal. But if word of this were to spread, the impact it would have on the Debs clan's standing would be tremendous.

"Ugh. If the clan is finished, then what will its reputation matter?" Nimitz shook his head, sighing.

Right now, the Debs clan had reached a critical juncture. If the Debs clan was

found to have been guilty of smuggling, then the entire clan would be exterminated, and all of its possessions would be taken by the King of Fenlai. Although the Debs clan had left behind some roots outside the kingdom, preventing it from being totally wiped out, almost all of its possessions were in the Kingdom of Fenlai.

If it was all lost, who knew how many years it would be before the Debs clan would return to its former glory?

Compared to the clan's future, a little bit of mockery and humiliation wasn't a big deal. After all, since when did the circle of nobles lack for embarrassing stories?

"But this has to be of Alice's own free will." Nimitz was a bit worried. "I can't forcibly deliver her to the Right Premier's manor, after all."

Nimitz didn't care at all about Alice's purity. She was just a woman, after all!

But Nimitz knew...

"This Alice has a special relationship with Linley. If I were to force her, and then Linley found out..." Just thinking about it made Nimitz frightened. Linley had a very special status within the Kingdom of Fenlai.

Although he had the rank of Marquis, in actuality, Linley belonged to the Radiant Church. In the past, when Clayde had invited Linley to join the ranks of the nobles in the Kingdom of Fenlai, he had even said that between the two of them, there was no need to observe the normal protocols between king and subject.

Clearly, Clayde desired to pull Linley closer to him.

And all of the nobles of the Kingdom of Fenlai knew that if Linley were willing, he could probably easily become a Vicar of the Radiant Church. In a few dozen years, it would be quite natural for Linley to become a Cardinal.

The status of a Cardinal was even higher than that of the King!

"Can't force her." Nimitz felt a headache coming. He was worried that Alice would refuse. He pondered things from Linley's point of view.

Alice was, after all, previously Linley's first love! If he, Nimitz, were to force

Alice to meet Merritt, and she were to lose her chastity, how could Linley not explode with rage?

Within the Debs clan's manor.

The clan hall was filled with many members of the Debs clan. Alice and Rowling were there as well. All of them were awaiting the return of Nimitz.

They were all worrying about the future of the Debs clan!

"Second Uncle is back! Second Uncle is back!" A middle-aged man standing in the doorway saw Nimitz and began to call out.

Instantly, all of the members of the Debs clan rushed out towards Nimitz en masse. Alice and Rowling exchanged glances, then rose and went to welcome him as well.

"Second Uncle, what's the situation?"

Nimitz looked at the group of people in front of him. Squeezing out a smile, he said, "The situation isn't too bad yet. Everyone, go back to your residences. Alice, stay. I need to talk to you."

Within the clan, Nimitz had a great deal of authority. Hearing his words, everyone departed.

Alice was somewhat confused, confused as to what Nimitz wanted to talk to her about.

"Big sister Alice, I'll go back to my room now," Rowling waved towards Alice and said in a quiet voice. A short period of time later, the only person left in the hall was Alice.

Nimitz stepped into the hall.

"Second Granduncle, what's wrong?" Alice stuttered.

Nimitz looked at Alice. Suddenly, he smiled warmly towards her. "Alice, don't be nervous. Sit down first. Let's have a good talk." As he spoke, Nimitz sat down as well.

Why was Nimitz, who previously was so stern to her, who seemed to always look down on her, being so warm to her now?

Alice couldn't help but feel suspicious.

"Come, sit." Nimitz's smile was so kind, so warm.

Alice nervously sat down.

Nimitz let out a long breath. Worry appeared between his brows. "Alice, we didn't expect that this would happen so soon after you and Kalan got engaged. I don't know who is secretly framing our Debs clan. If I did, I would kill him." A baleful aura appeared on Nimitz's face, but then it transformed into a look of helplessness. "But right now, the most important thing is to cleanse this stain from our name, and rescue Kalan and Bernard."

Alice nodded.

But in her heart, Alice was suspicious. "Why is Second Granduncle saying these things to me?"

Staring at Alice, Nimitz said with sincerity, "Alice, there is something I must beg of you."

"Beg me?" Alice was so startled, she rose to her feet.

Such was Nimitz's standing within the clan that even the clan leader would be respectful to him. But now, Nimitz was saying that he had to beg her to do something. How could Alice not be shocked?

"Alice, Lord Merritt is in charge of investigating this allegation that the Debs clan was engaged in the smuggling of water jade. Lord Merritt is very intrigued by you and wants to meet with you privately."

Nimitz said urgently to her, "Alice, this is a rare, wonderful opportunity to improve our relationship with him. Only by managing to have a good relationship with Lord Merritt would you be able to help our clan. Alice, you grew up alongside Kalan. You don't want to see him in jail either, right?"

Alice was stunned.

A private meeting?

Alice was someone who had lived in a noble clan as well, and knew all too well about the shameful things which occurred amongst the nobility. She instantly could guess that this meeting with Lord Merritt would be more than a



simple meeting.

“I... I...” Alice stuttered.

Nimitz begged, “Alice, our entire Debs clan is relying on you. I can even guarantee that so long as you can pull Lord Merritt to our side, you will be Kalan’s principal wife.”

Alice felt as though her mind was in shambles.

Alice was still pure and chaste of body.

She had refused to cross that last barrier with both Linley and Kalan. Even after getting engaged to Kalan, Alice still insisted on being married before she would enter the bridal bed with him.

But now she had to go deal with Lord Merritt...

“Alice, I’m begging you.” Nimitz gritted his teeth, leaving his chair and falling to his knees before her. “Alice, Kalan’s life is in your hands.”

“Kalan’s life?” Alice trembled.

Kalan had grown up alongside her. In recent days, in the face of ridicule and scorn from the other members of the Debs clan, it had been Kalan who protected her.

“Alright. I agree.” Alice gritted her teeth.

A look of surprised joy appeared on Nimitz’s face, then he hurriedly said, “Wonderful. How about this. Tomorrow at dusk, I’ll arrange for you to be brought to Lord Merritt’s manor.”

But right now, Alice’s face was extremely pale. She didn’t respond at all.

That next evening. Escorted by twelve knights, a carriage departed from the Debs clan’s manor, slowly rolling towards the manor of Lord Merritt. Within the carriage was only one person: Alice.

Alice quietly sat within the carriage, chewing on her lips. Her nervous hands were tightly gripping her dress.

The carriage continued to roll forward. Quite soon, it arrived at the main gate to Lord Merritt’s manor.

“Miss Alice, we’re here.” The voice of the carriage driver rang out from outside.

Hearing his words, Alice’s heart trembled. Her right hand drifted down to her waist. The firmness of the steel dagger by her side helped to slightly calm her mind down.

Taking a deep breath, Alice pushed open the carriage to the door and stepped out.

Within the welcoming hall of Lord Merritt’s manor.

Wearing a jacket on top and a skirt beneath, Alice was dressed relatively conservatively. Step by step, Alice managed to enter the hall relatively calmly. Alice looked around her, but saw nobody there within the hall.

“Hrm?” Alice couldn’t help but frown.

Just at this moment, a female attendant ran over. Respectfully, she said, “Miss Alice, the Lord Duke is in his study and would like to invite you there as well.”

“His study?” Alice shuddered slightly.

But under the urging gaze of the attendant, Alice still began to walk forwards with her.

The study was in a very quiet, secluded area. There were very few people here. Arriving at the door to the study, Alice saw a seemingly middle-aged, golden-haired man standing in front of a study desk, staring at some papers.

“This is Merritt?” Seeing Merritt, Alice’s first impression was that this was a very fierce person. Even when he sat down at his desk, his back was ramrod straight, and his eyes were sharp.

“Lord Duke, Miss Alice has arrived,” that female attendant said respectfully.

Only now did Merritt raise his head. Seeing Alice, he excitedly rose to his feet. “Haha, Miss Alice, you came? I’ve waited for quite a long time. Come, Miss Alice, please sit.” As he spoke, he left his seat and walked towards Alice.

Alice stepped into the study.

Alice looked around her. Towards the right side of the study, there were many bookshelves, covered with countless books. On the left side of the study, there was a bed.

“Often, when I’m reading or taking care of government affairs, I’ll get tired and will rest there,” Duke Merritt said with a smile. At the same time, he walked towards the study door and shut it.

Seeing the door to the study shut, leaving behind only her and Merritt in the room, Alice grew nervous.

“Lord Merritt, it’s better if we leave the door to the study open. I’m not accustomed to dark environments,” Alice hurriedly said.

## Limits

As he closed the door to the study, Merritt heard Alice's words. He couldn't help but turn to Alice with a smile. "Miss Alice, we're going to discuss the affairs of the Debs clan. We can't discuss those openly and publicly, can we? If his Majesty were to find out, then I would be in serious trouble. You should know that I'm taking on serious risks on behalf of your Debs clan. Best we leave the door closed."

Alice was stunned.

In terms of wordplay, how could Alice match this Lord Merritt, who had engaged in the highest levels of court intrigue for so long?

Smiling, Merritt walked past her. In front of the bookshelf, there were two chairs around a round table. Merritt would often chat with some of his friends here.

Merritt first sat down, then looked at Alice. "Alice, you should sit."

"Thank you, Lord Merritt." Alice secretly let out a sigh of relief, then sat down on the opposite chair. The thing which made Alice the most nervous in this study was that bed.

"Please wait a moment."

Smiling, Merritt rose to his feet, then pulled out a bottle of red wine and two wine cups. He poured himself and Alice a cup of wine each.

"Alice, this is the Bluerain red wine from the Yulan Empire, a sixty-year-old vintage. The flavor isn't bad. Have a taste." Merritt smiled as he raised his glass to her.

Alice was somewhat afraid that some sort of knockout drug had been mixed into the wine. But, under Merritt's gaze, Alice was forced to raise her own glass as well. Only, she just barely touched the wine with her lips.

Merritt didn't force her. Changing the topic, he said, "Alice, you and Kalan have already become engaged. I expect you know quite a bit about the affairs of the Debs clan. Did you know they were engaged in smuggling?"

"No, I didn't. I think Kalan wouldn't engage in smuggling," Alice hurriedly said. "Lord Merritt, the Debs clan is quite powerful. I think they wouldn't engage in this smuggling business."

With a smile that wasn't a smile, Merritt looked at Alice. "Hard to say."

"Ah!"

Merritt seemed to have seen something, and all of a sudden, he moved next to Alice, so close that his face was mere centimeters away from Alice's face.

Startled, Alice hurriedly retreated.

"Don't move." Merritt's shouted carried a hint of a command.

Born from long years of being accustomed to power, Merritt's commanding voice froze Alice in her tracks, as ill at ease as she was. Merritt carefully inspected Alice's hair, then looked down at Alice.

Upon lowering his head, his face was now only a few centimeters away from Alice's. This made Alice hurriedly bend her head away from him.

Seeing this, Merritt laughed, then returned to his original seat. He let out a helpless sigh. "Just then, I saw a single white hair on your head, but after you moved, I couldn't see it anymore."

A strand of white hair?

In her heart, Alice began to grow irritated. She lived together with Rowling now, and every morning, when they were bored, they would comb each other's hair. Often, she would find some white hairs on Rowling's head. But Rowling often expressed envy towards Alice, as she could never find white hair on Alice's head.

Rowling couldn't find any white hair despite combing Alice's hair every day. How could Merritt have found any?

But Alice didn't dare to say this.

“Alice, you are still young. Don’t be too upset. If you are upset, you’ll age faster, and thus have white hair,” Merritt said solicitously.

Alice only quietly listened to him as he spoke.

Merritt nudged his chair in Alice’s direction, then fixed his gaze upon Alice. “Alice, you are quite beautiful, you know. Your charm and aura of refinement are really quite mesmerizing to behold.”

Alice couldn’t help but feel shy and nervous.

Merritt leaned forward slightly, staring intensely at Alice. “Alice. Those wives of mine, all they care about are superficial things like money and glory. They seem so vulgar, so low. But you are totally different. Truly, you are, you know. The very first time I saw you, I was stunned.”

“I very much regret that I ended up marrying women such as them.” Merritt suddenly reached out and held Alice’s hand. Alice’s eyes suddenly widened. Merritt continued to look at Alice. “Alice, if I... if I were to tell you that I love you from the bottom of my heart, that I am smitten with you, would you believe me?”

Alice hurriedly stood up... but Merritt maintained his tight grip on her hand.

“Lord Merrit, Lord Merritt. I’m the fiancée of Kalan!” Alice struggled, and only after three attempts was she able to break free from Merritt’s grip.

Merritt looked at Alice with a smile. “As you say, you are only a fiancée, which means you aren’t married yet. You totally can marry another. As for Kalan, what does a kid like him know about having fun?”

As he spoke, Merritt once more moved nearer to Alice, while Alice continued to move back.

But in her nervousness, Alice didn’t notice in the slightest that Merritt was pressuring her into the direction of the bed.

“Alice. I really have fallen for you. I swear!” Merritt stared soulfully at Alice.

Merritt wasn’t lying. Over the course of admiring the sculpture ‘Awakening From the Dream’, and then upon seeing Alice herself, he really did fall for Alice. But this sort of ‘falling for’ was only a desire to possess.

“Lord Merritt!” Alice was growing frantic.

Suddenly, Alice’s back legs collided with the bed. Knocked off balance, Alice fell backwards onto the mattress.

A hint of a smile appeared on Merritt’s face. He immediately threw himself on top of Alice, all but pressing his body against hers. “Alice, my goddess, please satisfy the desires of this mortal who has been mesmerized by you. If you satisfy my desires, I’ll satisfy yours as well and clear the unjust stains from the Debs clan.”

Clear the stains of the Debs clan?

Staring at Merritt who was right on top of her, Alice couldn’t help but suddenly think back to a night she had been with Linley at a small hotel. The two of them had entangled themselves lustfully, but at the very end, she had stopped Linley.

How could she give up her chastity to this man in front of her?

“My goddess, come to me.” Merritt’s voice was very soft, as though he was trying to hypnotize her.

“No. No!”

Alice suddenly pulled the dagger from her waist and thrust it at Merritt. At the same time, the stones on the floor flew at Merritt.

Alice was an earth-style magus, after all!

But Merritt himself was a powerful warrior. His reflexes were very fast, and he quickly dodged to one side while at the same time slapping the dagger out of Alice’s hand.

Alice instantly dodged towards the other side, running for the door.

But with a flicker of his body, Merritt appeared between her and the door. With a smile that was not a smile on his face, he looked at Alice. “Alice. Do you still want to resist? Based on your prowess as a magus and that little knife, you want to resist me?”

“Lord Merritt, let me leave.” By now, Alice was firm in her resolve.

“You no longer wish to save the Debs clan? You don’t wish to save your fiancé, Kalan?” Merritt asked.

Alice’s eyes were determined. Gritting her teeth, she said, “Although I do wish to save them, this is not the way to do it. You beast!”

“Beast?” The expression on Merritt’s face changed. He coldly said, “Originally, I wanted for the mood to be a bit more romantic, but since you refuse to cooperate, then I’ll show you what a beast really looks like.”

Alice’s face turned pale.

“Merritt. Don’t go too far.” Frightened, Alice quickly retreated, grabbing the chair next to her and smashing it at Merritt.

With a single fist, Merritt easily broke the chair apart.

“Don’t resist. This place... is my manor,” Merritt said with a soft laugh.

Watching Merritt draw step by step closer to her, Alice gritted her teeth and said wildly, “Merritt! You’d best not forget that I once was Linley’s woman!”

These words halted Merritt in his tracks, stunning him.

Alice really did not want to say these words. She knew that her actions of the past had wounded Linley very deeply, and she didn’t want to have anything more to do with him. But at this point in time, she could think of no other way.

“Linley?” Standing there without moving, Merritt frowned.

Biting her lips, Alice stared at Merritt. “Merritt, I can pretend that nothing at all happened today. But if you go too far, then don’t blame me when I also go all-out afterwards. I trust you know how influential Linley is now.”

Merritt looked at Alice.

He really had been enchanted by Alice, but Merritt knew very well that Linley’s relationship with Alice was very special. Just from looking at that sculpture, ‘Awakening From the Dream’, one could tell how deep Linley’s affection for Alice had been.

“Linley’s feelings towards Alice really was in the realm of true love. If Linley were to find out...” Merritt’s head began to hurt.



Linley.

Very hard to deal with!

The current Linley already possessed incredible influence. Although he, Merritt, was powerful, in the end he was only the Right Premier of a single kingdom. To the Radiant Church, perhaps deposing one of the rulers of a kingdom was something it would do only after serious consideration, but they wouldn't even think twice before dealing with the Right Premier of a kingdom.

All Linley had to do was to ask the Radiant Church for their assistance. Dealing with him, a Right Premier, wouldn't be a problem.

But in the future, Linley would only be more formidable. This was one of the reasons why not a single member of the nobles of the Kingdom of Fenlai had dared to plot against Linley or make attempts against Linley's life, which was why, in front of Linley, they all behaved so courteously.

"Alas..." Merritt let out a long sigh. "Alice, I really, truly, have fallen for you from the depths of my heart, so much so that I lost my sense of rationality."

Merritt smiled apologetically at Alice. "I apologize. I've come back to my senses now. Since you aren't willing or able to have feelings for me, of course I cannot force myself on."

"Lord Merritt, I'll take my leave, then." Alice quickly scurried to the door, opened it, then rushed out.

Seeing Alice depart, the apologetic look dropped from Merritt's face, and his gaze grew vicious and cold. With a cold sneer, he spat out the word, "Bitch!"

By the time Alice had returned to the Debs clan manor, it was now totally dark.

Right now, all of the members of the Debs clan were in the middle of the main hall, eating dinner. Only, the atmosphere wasn't very good. The clan could be exterminated at any time, after all.

"Alice. You returned?" Rowling suddenly saw Alice running inside.

Nimitz and the others all stood up as well.

"As fast as that?" Nimitz frowned. Alice had come back far too early, much

earlier than he had expected.

“Alice, eat dinner with us,” Rowling immediately called to her.

On the walkway past the main hall, Alice glanced at the people inside and said apologetically, “I’m not feeling well. I’ll go back to my room and rest first.” Alice’s voice was very low and hoarse.

Rowling felt that Alice wasn’t acting normally.

“Let me go see how Alice is doing.” Rowling smiled at everyone, then left the hall, leaving behind Nimitz, who was frowning with suspicion.

Alice and Rowling, in their room.

Upon entering the room, Alice had immediately thrown herself into her bed. She could no longer hold back her tears, which poured out. Her heart was filled with wrongs and injustices.

“What did I do wrong? Lord, why must you punish me so?”

Alice was howling with rage in her heart.

“I never asked for much, only that I could have a simple, peaceful life. I want my parents to have a peaceful life, for myself to have a peaceful life. Why, why must you punish me so?” Alice’s heart was filled with misery. True, the Debs clan perhaps was going to be finished.

But what did that have to do with her?

Why did they have to send her to deal with Merritt?

Why did she have to be forced to the point where she had to shout out the words, “I once was Linley’s woman?” How difficult had it been for her to force these words out! Alice truly hadn’t wanted to say that!

“Big sister Alice, what happened?” Rowling ran into the room. Seeing Alice sobbing to the point where there was a huge wet spot on the bed, Rowling grew frantic with worry.

Rowling immediately went over and began to stroke Alice’s back. “Don’t cry, don’t cry. Whatever it is, you can tell me. Tell me.”

Alice immediately turned and threw herself into Rowling’s arms, bawling even

more fiercely. It wasn't as bad without anyone there to comfort her, but now that someone had come, Alice felt all the more aggrieved and wronged.

Rowling comforted Alice for more than half an hour before Alice finally became somewhat calmer.

"Big sister Alice, what exactly happened? Tell me." Rowling looked at Alice.

Alice took a deep breath, then slowly explained the injustice that had been done to her. "Little Rowling, you are also aware of the current situation with the Debs clan. Yesterday, Second Granduncle came and wanted to have a private chat with me. He wanted me to..."

The more she heard, the more fury Rowling felt.

She was angry at Nimitz's behavior. She was angry for what Alice had suffered. And she felt rage towards that beast-like Merritt's behavior. At the same time, she felt sympathy for Alice.

"I don't want to get involved anymore. I just want to live out a peaceful life," Alice said, sobbing sporadically.

Over these past few days, Rowling had been considering what the best way to help the Debs clan was. But upon hearing Alice's story, she suddenly understood a few things.

"Big sister Alice, don't be sad. No matter what, you definitely cannot let that Merritt destroy your chastity." Rowling comforted her.

Alice nodded.

"But we still have to come up with a way to save Kalan and the others," Rowling said. "Big brother Kalan is our fiancé, after all."

Alice also wanted to save him, but she didn't know how.

"We still have an option." Rowling looked at Alice. "But... I don't know if you would be willing to take it, sister Alice."

"Rowling..." Looking at Rowling, Alice had already guessed what she was going to say.

Rowling nodded. "Right. Go ask Linley for help. Today, as soon as you

mentioned his name, that Merritt no longer dared to touch you. Clearly, Linley is extremely influential. Based on what I know, not only does Linley have a relationship with the Radiant Church, he also has a relationship with the Dawson Conglomerate. Even his Majesty, King Clayde, treats Linley as he would a friend, rather than an ordinary subject. If Linley is willing to speak out, we would have a much greater chance of rescuing big brother Kalan.”

Currently, in the Kingdom of Fenlai, without question, people were more willing to defer to Linley than to anyone else.

Even the Left Premier and the Right Premier couldn’t compare with him.

Because, as one could easily tell, in the future Linley would be a high-level person within the Radiant Church. Even right now, he was viewed as an extremely important potential talent who needed to be cultivated and trained. For the sake of Linley, those two Cardinals of the Radiant Church had even gone to Hogg’s funeral and paid their respects to him. From this, one could easily see how important they viewed Linley as being.

“Big brother Linley?” Alice’s emotions were very mixed.

In truth, in Alice’s heart, she knew this was a possibility long ago, but she didn’t want to confront it. She truly didn’t wish to go beg Linley. She felt that she didn’t have the face to see him again.

She knew that she had wounded Linley too heavily. That moment when she had seen that sculpture, ‘Awakening From the Dream’, Alice understood how deeply Linley loved her. Or at least, how deeply he had once loved her.

She was ashamed to meet him!

“Big sister Alice, I understand your feelings.” Rowling tightly gripped Alice by the hands. “But, big sister Alice, big brother Kalan and his father are very likely to lose their lives. I beg you, please just suffer a bit on our behalf. At least Linley won’t act the way that Merritt did.”

Alice’s heart was filled with pain.

“No face? Is my self-respect more important, or are the lives of big brother Kalan and his father more important?” Alice asked herself this question. She had no other choice.

“Big sister Alice.” Rowling stared beseechingly at Alice.

Alice took a deep breath, forcing herself to calm down. Looking at Rowling, she nodded. “Alright. I’ll go see big brother Linley tomorrow.”

## The Plea

At the manor of the Prime Court Magus. Within the Hot Springs Garden.

An earthen glow emanated from a patch of grass within the Hot Springs Garden. Earth magic – Supergravity Field. Right now, Linley was dressed only in a pair of long pants, his upper body bare as he trained in the grass.

Those muscles on his bare upper body rippled like water. There wasn't a trace of excess flesh. Right now, Linley's body, organs, veins, and arteries were all being forced to withstand a gravity four times stronger than normal.

Fortunately, after becoming a Dragonblood Warrior, Linley's body had reached new heights in power.

Linley's legs were arched in a bow-drawing stance, and his two hands were raised parallel by his sides, each holding up a giant boulder. Each of these boulders weighed over a hundred pounds. Under the quadruple gravity field, the two combined weighed nearly a thousand pounds.

His legs as taut as steel cables, Linley's body was as straight as a quill. His gaze, fixed in front of him, didn't waver either.

One drop of sweat after another rolled down Linley's body, covering his entire body in sweat. But Linley persevered...

Despite being designated the Prime Court Magus for the kingdom, Linley continued to train non-stop every day. His guards stood solemnly outside, alongside two female attendants who were ready to answer Linley's call at any moment. The door to the Hot Springs Garden, however, was closed.

Whenever Linley was training, no one was permitted to enter.

Once, his majesty King Clayde, ruler of Fenlai, had come to the manor. The palace attendant ignored the guards at the Hot Springs Garden and charged in directly, instructing Linley to meet with his Majesty. Linley immediately issued

an order for that attendant to receive twenty strikes of the military rod. That physically weak attendant ended up being beaten to death.

But afterwards, King Clayde didn't blame Linley in the slightest. On the contrary, he berated his subordinates, telling them that while at the Hot Springs Garden, they absolutely must obey Linley's rules.

"Lord Linley is always so hard-working when he trains. He's spent an entire day in there. When he's not engaging in warrior training, he is engaging in magus training. I think the only time he ever rests is the time he spends in his stonesculpting," one female attendant said in a low voice. The other female attendant also nodded. "I've never seen such a hard-working noble before. In the previous household I worked for, the instructor for the warriors himself only spent four hours a day training."

The nearby guardian knights of the Radiant Church also felt a great deal of admiration for Linley. Most geniuses, after their initial glory, would begin to fall behind. Each year, the Radiant Church would train a good number of geniuses. However, not only were none of those geniuses as outstanding as Linley, once their status had risen, they would become totally distracted by the material pleasures of the world and fall behind.

"If Lord Linley continues like this, in all likelihood, he will be the youngest combatant of the ninth rank in history, and the youngest Saint-level in history as well," one of the guardian knights said softly.

The other guardian knight also nodded.

All of these people very much admired Linley's painstaking diligence in training.

Only..."Lord Linley is a bit too strict and severe," one of the female attendants said in an unhappy voice.

In their hearts, Linley was handsome, young, had high standards for himself, and powerful. He had a future! A person like him could be considered to be all but perfect. Only, he was extremely severe towards others. Even when dealing with female servants like them, he didn't act with any gentleness or affection.

What these people didn't know was that although Linley did engage in

stonesculpting, he wasn't really resting; when he was stonesculpting, he was increasing his spiritual energy at the fastest rate possible! Linley's was increasing his power at every moment!

Within the Hot Springs Garden.

"Whew."

An hour of warrior's training had come to an end. Linley began to activate the Dragonblood battle-qi in his body, and that tired, weary feeling disappeared. From a nearby box, Linley withdrew a straight chisel, then walked over to one of those two boulders he had dropped onto the grass. These were used by Linley when stonesculpting.

Staring at these boulders and their internal lines and structure, Linley began to mentally design a sculpture. In the blink of an eye, a mental image of a warrior's face was formed.

A hint of a smile on his face, the straight chisel in Linley's hand began to move.

In a very rhythmic pattern, the straight chisel flew and chopped about, causing shattered bits of stone to fly everywhere. Linley knew exactly what he was doing, and so each chop was made with absolute confidence, and the strength he used was just right.

What a wonderful feeling!

Linley's spirit became submerged within the ebbs and vibrations of the surrounding earth elemental essence, allowing him to sense the lines and cracks of the stone. Linley's spirit also submerged into the surrounding wind elemental essence, allowing every single stroke of the knife to reach the peak of perfection in accuracy.

Nature!

Linley's soul had become one with nature, and like a benevolent mother, nature surrounded Linley's soul, allowing it to grow, to strengthen.

"Whew."

Letting out a breath, Linley withdrew his straight chisel.



After spending two hours, this giant boulder had been transformed into a rough outline. As for the fine details, Linley planned to finish those tomorrow. Every day, Linley set limits on how much time he could spend on his stonesculpting.

He had to use the right complement of training regimes to achieve the maximum effect in terms of raising his power!

Training started every day at five in the morning, while now, it was eight o'clock. It was time for Linley to eat breakfast.

Putting down his straight chisel, Linley stepped out of his pants and into the hot springs pool. Lying within the hot springs, feeling the hot springs water rush against his muscles, Linley closed his eyes comfortably, finally allowing himself some time to rest.

"Enter," Linley suddenly shouted.

Those two female attendants who had been quietly standing outside the door this entire time immediately entered with two trays. Those round trays were covered with all sorts of delicacies and fruits.

"Lord Linley." Those two female attendants put the two round trays down on the nearby table, then respectfully awaited Linley's commands.

While obediently standing to the side, those two female attendants couldn't help but sneak peeks at Linley. Linley's naked, muscular, reclining male body was indeed a source of fascination to them.

"You can go for now."

Linley said calmly.

"Yes, milord." The two female attendants immediately left respectfully.

From start to finish, Linley had not glanced at them even once.

Next, Linley stepped out of the pool, put on a set of clean underwear and clothes, then sat on a chair and began to eat breakfast.

"Swish." A black shadow rushed out from the faraway grassy fields. It was Bebe. Before this, when Linley was training and stonesculpting, Bebe was napping.

“Boss, it’s time for breakfast, eh? Alright, this big piece of roast meat is mine.” Bebe’s eyes instantly were drawn to a particular large piece of roasted magical beast meat.

Linley chuckled.

“Grandpa Doehring, do we really have no method available to us to deal with that Clayde at present?” Linley mentally said to Doehring Cowart.

Doehring Cowart flew out of the Coiling Dragon ring. Seating himself on another chair, he smiled at Linley. “Linley, Clayde is a warrior of the ninth rank. The gap between the two of you is too vast. Even if you assume the complete Dragonform, you are only a warrior of the early-stage eighth rank. Oh, wait, now that you are currently a late-stage warrior of the sixth rank, when you assume the Dragonform, you can be considered to be a late-stage warrior of the eighth rank. But nonetheless, you are far from being a match for Clayde.”

Linley felt very unwilling to accept this. He knew, now, that the person who had instructed his mother to be abducted by Duke Patterson was King Clayde. But right now, he had no chance of dealing with Clayde at all.

“The only choice I have is to continue training hard.” Linley unconsciously balled his fists, with the fork in his hands warping from his strength.

In the early ranks, the extra boost provided by the Dragonform transformation was especially large. As a warrior of the late-stage sixth rank, based on his current training regime, in about half a year, there was hope for Linley to reach the seventh rank. Upon reaching the seventh rank of power, when using the Dragonform, Linley would be able to step into the early-stage ninth rank.

“Lord Linley.” The voice of a female attendant could be heard from outside.

“Come in,” Linley said calmly.

Only now did the female attendant rush in. Respectfully, she said, “Lord Linley, outside, there’s a young lady named Alice who wishes to meet you.”

“Alice?” Linley’s eyelids flickered. He looked at the female attendant. “Bring her to the guest hall. I will be there shortly.” Linley stood up as he spoke.

“Yes, Lord Linley.” The female attendant didn’t dare to tease Linley in the slightest. They all knew how legendarily severe Linley was with his subordinates.



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Alice was clutching a glass of water, seeming very ill at ease. For her to come beg Linley was asking a lot of her. But she had no other choice.

Footsteps could be heard.

Alice’s entire body shook, and she immediately turned her head to look.

Dressed in a loose, long robe, Linley smiled as he entered from an inner hall. Seeing Alice look at him, he immediately nodded and smiled back. “Alice, long time no see.” As he spoke, Linley sat down at the host’s seat.

Alice could clearly feel that Linley’s attitude was now totally different from a year ago. A year ago, Linley was still very young and immature.

But now, Linley carried himself with an unconscious noble grace and poise. Just from that faint smile, one could sense his grandeur, a grandeur which only came from someone being assured of his high status.

“Big brother Linley.” Alice forced her voice to sound calm, but even despite that, her voice still trembled slightly.

“Would you like to eat some fruit? I remember that you loved to eat olives.” Linley glanced at one of his female attendants.

A short time later, the female attendant returned with a plate of fruit.

“Thank you.” Alice picked up an olive and took a small bite. At this moment, Alice couldn’t help but think back to when she and Linley had eaten olives together. Back then, Linley had fed them to her.

Alice couldn’t help but turn to look up at Linley, only to find that Linley was smiling at her.

“Big brother Linley.” Alice put down the fruit, looking at Linley. “There’s something I want to ask your help with.”

“You need my help?” Linley had already guessed at the reason behind this visit of Alice’s.

“Go ahead,” Linley said directly.

Alice took a deep breath, then looked at Linley seriously. “Big brother Linley, you already know about what is happening with Kalan’s clan. I think... Kalan and the others are innocent. I hope you, big brother Linley, can help them and say a few words on their behalf to his Majesty. I hope you can wash away these unjust accusations and return their innocence to them. I know that his Majesty will definitely give you face.”

Linley couldn’t help but laugh helplessly.

Innocence?

Others might not be aware, but how could he, who had killed Patterson, be unaware? When he had killed Patterson, Patterson had personally told him about this smuggling affair. There was an 80% to 90% chance that this was with regards to the Debs clan!

“Wash away these unjust accusations? Why do you believe they are innocent? Alice, how much do you really know about the Debs clan?” Linley looked at Alice.

Alice was startled.

It had taken her a tremendous amount of courage to force out those words just now. But after Linley answered her with a question, she had a feeling... that Linley wasn’t going to help!

She suddenly wanted to cry. She felt extremely miserable.

Alice stood up. Curtseying towards Linley, she said, “Big brother Linley, I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have come here today. I know that in the past, I hurt you very deeply. For me to come now and ask you to help save the Debs clan is really excessive of me. It’s okay if you don’t help. I won’t blame you.” As Alice saw it, Linley and Kalan were rivals in love. It was already very kind of Linley not to throw more stones in the drying well, to kick him when he was down.

As he looked at Alice, Linley’s heart was very calm

With regards to his failed relationship with his first love, Linley now regarded it only as a bygone dream. The current Linley had already experienced the battle in the Foggy Valley, the transformation into a Dragonblood Warrior, and the death of his father. And now, he had embarked on a dark road of vengeance!

On the road to vengeance, the thing which Linley had to do was to suppress himself, to be cruel, to be cold, to not slacken in the slightest. The current Linley was, mentally, far stronger than he had been a year ago, and far more mature as well. That young, naïve Linley of a year ago couldn't compare at all to the current Linley. He also wasn't the Linley that Alice thought he was.

After having experienced so much, he had matured! Linley had experienced far too much!

"Big brother Linley, I'll leave now." Alice immediately stood to leave, her tears at the precipice of coming out.

"Alice." Linley stood up as well, stretching his hand out and resting it against Alice's shoulders.

Alice turned her head to stare at Linley in amazement. Linley was gazing at her. In a serious voice, he said, "Alice, there's so much that you don't know. Whether or not the Debs clan is innocent isn't something that you can determine. However, since you made up your mind to come ask me for help, I won't just stand by and watch. But... whether or not I'll be able to succeed in saving them is another question."

## The Visit

Alice felt her heart suddenly tremble. A warm feeling suddenly rushed into her heart, a sensation of thankfulness mixed with a boundless regret.

“Big brother Linley, thank you. Thank you.” Alice couldn’t help but repeat herself. Her tears were already beginning to shimmer in her eyes. The tears of excitement.

Linley smiled. “Go back. This afternoon, I’ll pay a visit to his Majesty at his palace.”

Linley could feel that right now, his heart was very calm when he saw Alice. When seeing Alice, all he was seeing was a female friend whom he was on good terms with. Nothing more.

“Alright. Thank you.” Alice glanced at Linley one more time, then turned her head and left, her thoughts extremely complicated.

Originally, Alice was afraid that because in the past, she had hurt Linley, Linley would feel hatred for Kalan, which would cause Linley to not help save Kalan. But Linley’s reaction had been totally out of her expectations. Linley wasn’t agitated at all. He was very calm.

Watching Alice’s departing back, Linley sat down. Grabbing a fruit, he began to casually eat it. At this time, Bebe popped out as well.

“Boss, you’re gonna help that Alice? If it were me, I would’ve kicked her out long ago. Heck, it’s enough that you didn’t just slap her to death with one palm!” Bebe said unhappily.

Linley glanced at Bebe. “Bebe, humans aren’t magical beasts.”

At this time, Doehring Cowart flew out of the Coiling Dragon ring. Looking at Linley with an approving gaze, he said, “Linley, you performed very well. I was a bit worried that you’d have a child’s temper and shoo her away, throwing

another stone into a drying well.”

“A child’s temper?” Linley was startled.

In Doehring Cowart’s eyes, such behavior was indeed that of a child.

“That’s right. Women, psh. They are all over the place.” Doehring Cowart chuckled.

Linley was instantly speechless. He was very much not in favor of Doehring Cowart’s viewpoint on women, which was rather similar to the viewpoints of Yale and Reynolds.

“Alright, enough chat. I need to continue my training.” Linley immediately rose and returned to the Hot Springs Garden.

As far as Linley was considered, Alice was nothing more than a side-episode, incapable of affecting his mood. Right now, the only thing Linley cared about was... avenging his father.



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“His Majesty is in his study, laboring over affairs of state. Lord Linley, please come with me to the study,” the palace attendant said respectfully.

Linley nodded.

Bebe standing on his shoulders, Linley followed the attendant towards the study. After a while, they finally arrived.

“Your Majesty! Lord Linley has arrived!” The palace attendant called out loudly from outside the door to the study.

Clayde, who had been absorbed in reading some texts, raised his head. When his tiger-like gaze landed upon Linley, his eyes shone excitedly. Laughing loudly, he said, “Linley, quick, come in. There’s no need for the two of us to stand on so much ceremony.”

“Yes, your Majesty.” Linley laughed faintly as he entered the study. Clayde, in Linley’s eyes, really was a bold, straightforward man, and was incredibly polite when interacting with Linley, never using his position as the king to try and bully

him.

“If it wasn’t for my father’s death,” Linley mused to himself, “Perhaps you and I would’ve become friends. But there will come a day where I must kill you. Right now, the only thing I am lacking is an opportunity.” Linley had never hesitated in his determination to kill Clayde.

As soon as he had the opportunity, he would definitely kill him.

Clayde clinked wine cups with Linley in a toast, took a sip, then said, “Linley. It is quite rare that you would voluntarily come pay a visit to the palace. What business do you, my Prime Court Magus, have to discuss with me today?”

Linley chuckled.

The Prime Court Magus actually had quite a few responsibilities, but Linley had never undertaken any of them. He allowed the other court magi to assume many of the responsibilities, and Clayde had never given him any pressure. After all, Linley was only a servant of the Kingdom of Fenlai in name. All he was doing... was showing that he, Linley, considered himself to be on Clayde’s side.

“It’s true that I came here today to discuss something.” Linley smiled as he looked at Clayde. “With the Debs clan under suspicion of smuggling water jade, your Majesty ordered that Kalan and Bernard be seized, right?”

“That is so.” Clayde frowned as he looked at Linley. “What, you’ve also come to speak on their behalf?”

Over this period of time, quite a few nobles had come to speak on behalf of the Debs clan. The reason they had done this was because the Debs clan had made use of their fortune.

“If you really want to save their clan, I can indeed give you face,” Clayde said forthrightly.

The only thing Clayde really wanted to do was to break the power structure that had been erected by his younger brother Patterson. As for the Debs clan, he was going to dispose of them just as a matter of course. He was totally willing to pardon the Debs clan in exchange for Linley now owing him a favor. After all, even if he were to pardon the Debs clan, he could also squeeze them for quite a hefty price in the process.



“No.” Linley only shook his head. “I haven’t come to speak on their behalf.”

“What?” Clayde looked curiously at Linley.

Linley said casually, “Your Majesty, the question of whether or not the Debs clan engaged in the smuggling of water jade naturally has to be handled in a fair, aboveboard manner.”

“Oh?” Clayde looked questioningly at Linley. “Then Linley, the reason you came today was because...”

Linley laughed. “I’m thinking that it’s enough for you to have seized the clan leader, Bernard, due to your suspicion that the Debs clan engaged in the smuggling of water jade. As for his son, there’s no need to seize him. After all, what’s the point of seizing a successor? If you seize the first one, they’ll still have a second one. As long as their clan isn’t exterminated, someone will continue the line.”

“Linley, you mean to say...” Clayde looked at Linley.

Linley looked back at Clayde. “Your Majesty, I hope you can release Kalan.”

“Oh, release Kalan. I heard that you and Kalan...?” Clayde had done a very thorough investigation on Linley. Naturally, he knew of the complicated history between Linley, Kalan, and Alice.

Linley let out a helpless laugh. “Your Majesty, that was a long time ago.”

Clayde reminded him, “Linley, I must remind you that based on my investigations, this Kalan fellow is a very vicious, narrow-minded person who can hold a grudge.”

“I know.” Linley nodded slightly.

Based on the few interactions he had with Kalan, Linley had already sensed that Kalan viewed him with hostility. And... Linley knew that during the seven day exhibition of his sculpture, ‘Awakening From the Dream’, someone had desired to destroy it.

Destroying a sculpture was an act which benefited nobody.

Aside from Kalan, Linley couldn’t think of anyone else who would want to destroy ‘Awakening From the Dream’.

“Then why do you help him?” Clayde continued.

“Your Majesty. Do you believe a narrow-minded man of limited vision such as him is someone I would be concerned about?” Smiling, Linley looked at Clayde. Clayde blinked, then laughed as well.

“Right. In the past, it could be said that you and Kalan were old acquaintances. But now, not only does he not wish to befriend you, he even harbors enmity towards you. It is his father who continues to try and befriend you. Compared to his father, Kalan’s vision really is very limited.” Clayde laughed loudly.

Clayde patted Linley on the shoulders. “Don’t worry. I’ll instruct Merritt to handle this case fairly and to investigate everything thoroughly. The Debs clan definitely won’t suffer any injustice. But if the Debs clan really was guilty of smuggling water jade, I won’t allow them to escape punishment either.”

“Right. Handle the case fairly.” Linley nodded.

On the way back home in the carriage, Bebe was lying atop of Linley’s thighs.

“Wow, Boss, you are so evil. The leader of the Debs clan definitely engaged in smuggling. Later on, his clan will be finished. Even if Kalan is able to escape for now, in the future, he’ll still be in terrible straits!” Bebe said excitedly.

Bebe had wanted to destroy Kalan a long time ago. Linley shook his head with a laugh. “Whether or not the Debs clan really will be finished is hard to say. For example, they could give the majority of their clan’s fortune directly to King Clayde, and perhaps Clayde would give them a way out. But no matter what, now that they’ve fallen into Clayde’s hands, even if they don’t die, they’ll lose several layers of skin and flesh.”

Linley fully understood how dark the world of nobles could be. Although on the surface, they talked about handling things fairly, that was nothing more than a sham. “Compared to Clayde, the Debs clan is too weak.” Linley shook his head.

That puny little Kalan was someone Linley had never worried about. Kalan simply wasn’t even close to being on the same level as Linley. The one Linley wanted to deal with was Clayde!

“Milord, we have arrived,” the driver said respectfully.

Linley pushed open the carriage door and stepped out. With a leap, Bebe hopped onto Linley’s shoulders again. Just as Linley was about to enter his manor, a gate guard said respectfully, “Lord, a guest just came by. He’s currently in the main hall waiting for you.”

“A guest? In the main hall?” Linley felt suspicious.

There often would be nobles coming to visit Linley, but without his permission to come in, all of them would quietly wait outside. Only people with a very high status, such as Duke Patterson or King Clayde, or Cardinal Guillermo, would directly head to the main hall, instead of waiting outside.

“Who is it?” Linley couldn’t help but ask.

“No clue, but in his hands, he was holding the medal of a Cardinal,” the guard said respectfully. As a Knight of the Radiant Church, he was very familiar with the insignias of the Cardinals.

Each Cardinal only had a single medal. Naturally, some extremely powerful Ascetics had medals as well. Possession of a medal implied a certain status, representing that this person’s position was no less than that of a Cardinal.

“An insignia?” Linley was startled.

Without hesitating at all, Linley immediately went towards the main hall. By the time Linley passed through the walkway and reached the main hall, he was shocked by who he saw.

Within the main hall was a middle-aged, black-haired man wearing a long, loose robe. Judging from appearances, he was in his thirties or forties. He gave off an indolent, lazy aura.

When Linley saw this middle-aged man, that middle-aged man seemed to sense him as well. He immediately looked over towards Linley, a look of excitement in his eyes. “Master Linley, you came?”

“Master Linley?” Linley’s mind was full of questions, but he quickly entered the main hall.

“You are... oh, I remember now. You were that one who made the bid of ten

million gold coins.” Linley remembered now. During the sculpture auction of ‘Awakening From the Dream’, this middle-aged man was the one who had bid ten million.

The middle-aged man nodded excitedly. “I didn’t expect Master Linley to remember me. This makes me so excited. Oh, right. Let me introduce myself. My name is... Cesar.”

“Cesar?” Linley had never heard this name before.

“Cesar?!” Doebling Cowart’s voice suddenly boomed out in Linley’s mind. “I didn’t imagine that little freak Cesar would still remain on this plane, in the Yulan continent.”

Linley was startled.

Grandpa Doebling knew this Cesar? Grandpa Doebling was from a long gone era! If he knew this man, then how old would this Cesar be?

“Linley, this Cesar is a total freak. His rate of improvement in strength is extremely fast, and he kills without blinking. When I was alive, he had already entered the Saint level. Although back then, he was only an early-stage Saint-level, after five thousand years, based on his rate of improvement, he is most likely far more powerful now.”

Linley’s heart clenched.

The man in front of him appeared to be only thirty or forty, but was actually already a Saint-level combatant during Doebling Cowart’s era. Doebling Cowart had only lived for a thousand years before dying, but this Cesar, if one were to count accurately, had been alive for nearly six thousand years now.

A six-thousand-year-old freak!

“Master Linley, what is it?” Cesar said with concern. “Your face seems to have a rather unpleasant look.”

“Nothing, Mr. Cesar. Please, sit.” Linley forcibly calmed himself down, but whenever he thought of who this person in front of him was, he couldn’t help but be stunned.

A six-thousand-year-old freak, a super-combatant who had survived from the

era of the Pouant Empire until the modern era. He had already been a Saint-level combatant back then. And now?

“Master Linley, I am very much in awe of your sculpting skills. If it weren’t for the fact that Delia, that little girl, begged me, that day I definitely would’ve bought your sculpture.” Cesar pursed his lips as he spoke, but then his eyes lit up. “So Master Linley, when are you and that Delia girl getting married?”

“Married?”

No matter how stunned Linley had been by Cesar, upon hearing these words, Linley’s eyes bulged out of his sockets as he stared speechlessly at Cesar.

## The King of Killers

Cesar stared at Linley suspiciously. “What? Can it be that the little girl of the Leon clan isn’t your fiancée?”

“Fiancée?” Linley mouthed the words.

Seeing Linley’s reaction, Cesar seemed to understand something. Laughing, he said, “Haha, how amusing, how amusing! Master Linley, I must say, that little Miss Delia of the Leon clan has spent quite a lot of trouble on your half. She’s spent a lot of time, a lot of effort, and also gold in order to buy that sculpture of yours, ‘Awakening From the Dream’.”

Linley stared questioningly at Cesar. “Mr. Cesar, can you perhaps tell me where you heard that Delia was my fiancée, and that we were going to get married?”

Cesar stroked his goatee. Delightedly, he said, “Mustn't say, mustn't say.”

But in his mind, Cesar thought back to the contents of the letter which Delia had her servant deliver to him. He mused to himself, “For a girl to have the courage to act in such a way shows that her feelings towards Linley are genuine. Best I not say anything, lest I end up embarrassing that little girl, Delia.”

Cesar knew that when a girl told him certain things, it would be rather morally wrong for him to spread it to others as well. He, Cesar... was a very principled man.

Linley buried his curiosity. After all, Cesar describing Delia as his fiancée was a small matter. This man in front of him was a six-thousand-year-old freak. This was what mattered.

“Mr. Cesar, for you to be here with one of the medals of the Radiant Church, does that mean you have come to me on the business of the Radiant Church?” Linley intentionally tried to probe the reason the man had come.

Cesar sat down with a dramatic gesture, then shook his head. “The Radiant Church? Don’t lump me in with those fellows from the Radiant Church.”

“Then this medal?” Linley stared questioningly at Cesar.

Cesar casually said, “Oh. It’s from back when I killed that Cardinal. I figured this medal would eventually come in handy, so I took it from his corpse. On occasion, I’d take it out and present it. I’ve got to say, it really has come in handy over the years.”

“Killed a Cardinal, then casually swiped his medal?” Linley’s heart trembled, and he couldn’t help but feel cold.

This Cesar in front of him really was an extremely forceful person.

Doehring Cowart’s voice rang out in Linley’s mind again. “Linley, back when I was alive, Cesar had already entered the Saint level. At that time, the Radiant Church wasn’t too powerful. After five thousand years, Cesar is definitely at an extremely terrifying level of power. The Radiant Church wouldn’t offend him just because he killed a Cardinal.”

“After all... Cesar is a Saint-level assassination specialist. A Saint-level combatant such as him is far more dangerous than your ordinary Saint-level combatant. What’s more, an assassination specialist, upon reaching the peak of the Saint level, is even more dangerous.”

After hearing Doehring Cowart’s words, Linley began to understand.

In the past, when he was in the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, he had encountered assassins as well. Linley knew very well that despite only being of the sixth rank as well, a specially trained assassin of the sixth rank could be far more dangerous than other combatants of the sixth rank.

Because assassins specialized in ‘ambush’ and in ‘one-hit kills’. When they killed someone, they acted with no scruples or honor at all.

Most Saint-level combatants, on the other hand, cared greatly about their personal honor and reputation.

A peak-stage Saint-level combatant who had no shame and who was an assassin possessed terrifying power.

“That’s the reason why the Radiant Church has never tried to recover the medal from Cesar. This is also the reason why Cesar is able to live so openly in the Holy Capital, Fenlai City.” Doehring Cowart sighed. “This Cesar is really living a rather comfortable life.”

Hearing these words from Doehring Cowart, Linley couldn’t help but feel admiration for Cesar.

“What, are you afraid?” Cesar saw that Linley had fallen silent. He couldn’t help but grin at Linley. “Relax, that was a long time ago. It has been quite a while since I’ve last killed someone.”

Quite a while? How long a period of time was that? Remembering that the man in front of him was a six-thousand-year-old assassin, Linley wasn’t too sure.

“I’m fine. I’m just amazed by Mr. Cesar’s prowess, that you could kill a Cardinal of the Radiant Church, but still live openly here in the Holy Capital.” Linley smiled.

Cesar’s eyes lit up, and he clapped Linley on the shoulders, nodding. “Not bad, not bad. You really are a master sculptor; your mental fortitude is far stronger than most others. Despite knowing my power, you aren’t frightened in the slightest.”

“Master Linley, I’ve come to pay you a visit because I wish to ask something of you.” Cesar looked at Linley, speaking with sincerity.

Linley quickly said, “Mr. Cesar, please speak. As long as it is within my capabilities, I will definitely assist.”

But Cesar put on a stern look, saying, “Master Linley, I, Cesar, have always hated owing favors to others. Since I’m asking a favor of you, naturally I will assist you with something as well.”

Linley felt joy in his heart.

A favor of an assassin who had reached the Saint level over five thousand years ago was priceless. In Linley’s mind, a thought quickly flashed by — Kill Clayde!



This entire time, Linley had been bitterly trying to come up with a way to deal with Clayde, or perhaps capture and interrogate him. Linley absolutely had to find out what happened to his mother. But in terms of both personal power and total forces available, Clayde was far more powerful than Linley. He had no way at all to deal with Clayde.

But now, Linley had a way.

“If I were to invite this Cesar to go kidnap Clayde, that shouldn’t be too hard.” Linley began to grow excited. This problem had already vexed him for a long time. It seemed as though he could resolve it now.

“Mr. Cesar, please tell me what you need,” Linley said seriously.

Cesar said boldly, “Fine, then I’ll just say it outright.”

Rubbing his goatee, Cesar’s attitude was that of chatting with an old friend. “I don’t have too many hobbies. Women, I like. In the past, killing was also a hobby. But after I got bored of killing, I began to take an interest in art. And naturally, I am most infatuated by stonesculpting, that highest of art forms. Master Linley... last time, I felt a great deal of regret for being unable to purchase your sculpture, ‘Awakening From the Dream’. When I went back, I couldn’t even sleep well at night. After tossing and turning many times, I decided to come pay a visit to you in person.”

“Mr. Cesar, what are you trying to say?” Linley’s brow was furrowed.

He had already sold off the sculpture, ‘Awakening From the Dream’. Delia had been the one to buy it.

“I was hoping to ask you, Master Linley, to help me carve a sculpture.” Cesar looked hopefully at Linley.

“Easily done.” Linley quickly agreed. Every day, he spent a few hours training himself by carving sculptures. To spend some of that time carving one for Cesar was an easy task.

“I have a few secondary requirements for this sculpture.” Cesar stood up, looking a bit embarrassed.

Embarrassed!

Right, this six-thousand-year-old freak seemed a bit embarrassed.

“Mr. Cesar, feel free to explain.” Linley looked at Cesar with curiosity.

Cesar chortled. “Master Linley, I hope... this sculpture will be of me, and will capture my unique aura.”

“Use you as my model? Your unique aura?” Linley was startled.

Seeing the look on Linley’s face, Cesar quickly said, “What, will that be hard?”

“No. That isn’t it.” Linley shook his head, frowning. “Using you as the model is very easy. Having seen you once, it’s easy for me to remember what you look like. I can sculpt you without any problems. But it’s a bit more complicated to imbue the statue with your unique aura as well. This is because every person has a different aura at different times, such as one aura for when they are angry, another when they are happy, still another when they are sad, or wounded, or both angry and sad...”

Cesar immediately laughed. “Easy. The aura I want... is the aura I have when I am at my manliest.”

“Your manliest?” Linley looked questioningly at Cesar. “Mr. Cesar, when do you feel you are at your manliest?”

Linley was beginning to wonder if this six-thousand-year-old freak had some mental problems.

Cesar said confidently, “I believe that I appear manliest when I am killing someone! My nickname is the ‘King of Killers’ for a reason, you know!”

Cesar, the ‘King of Killers’!

This was a very terrifying name in the Yulan continent. Neither the Four Great Empires nor the two major alliances wished to offend this individual. Even the four major assassin’s guilds, if they were forced to nominate the most outstanding person within their ranks, would without question select this person who had dominated the Yulan continent for over five thousand years. Cesar, the ‘King of Killers’.

A peak-stage Saint-level combatant, and specialized in assassination techniques! In terms of the numbers and complexity of assassination

techniques he possessed, he had already reached the pinnacle of perfection in this field. Those people who had received some training from Cesar went so far as to say his assassination techniques had reached the field of artistry.

The strongest assassin. The King of Killers!

Although there were quite a few people in the Yulan continent who had become peak-stage Saint-level combatants, such as the Holy Emperor of the Radiant Church, or the Dark Patriarch of the Cult of Shadows, or that Lord Fallen Leaf of the Radiant Church. And of course, the Four Great Empires each had their own peak-stage Saint-levels.

But without question, every single one of these combatants were wary of the King of Killers, Cesar.

Because in terms of assassination, none of them could match him.

The power of the peak-stage Saint-level 'King of Killers' was simply too terrifying. Even the Four Great Empires and the two major alliances held fast to the principle of, 'do not offend him if it is at all possible to avoid doing so', much less the other major clans of the Yulan continent.

Originally, during the auction, Cardinal Lampson and Cardinal Guillermo had been prepared to bid an extremely high price so Linley would feel grateful towards them. But upon seeing Cesar make a bid, they were so scared they no longer dared to bid at all. Even that old servant of the Leon clan, Shaw, had been terrified upon seeing Cesar, the King of Killers. Afterwards, only after Delia had wrote Cesar a letter and obtained his agreement did Delia dare to make another bid.

From this, one could tell how truly formidable this 'King of Killers' was.

Despite him having a medal of a Cardinal for so many years, the Radiant Church had never tried to regain it, and allowed Cesar to use it to deceive others as he pleased without a peep of protest. This was their show of goodwill towards Cesar. As for that Cardinal he had killed, the only thing that could be said was that he died in vain.

"When killing someone?" Linley shook his head. "Mr. Cesar, I've never seen you kill anyone. How would I know what you are like when you kill someone?"

At present, Linley still knew very little regarding the names of the Saint-level combatants of the Yulan continent. Even the world famous 'King of Killers', Cesar, he had never heard of before.

"That's easy. I'll just show you right now what it looks like when I kill someone. Watch carefully." Cesar's attitude instantly changed.

"Wait!" Linley hurriedly shouted out in alarm. "Mr. Cesar, please don't kill anyone in my home."

"Who said I was going to kill someone? I'm just going to show off the way I look when I kill someone, that's all."

Cesar glanced at Linley rather sourly.

Linley laughed awkwardly.

In his heart, he was filled with a great deal of trepidation towards this 'King of Killers', Cesar. When he heard Cesar say he was going to show how he looked upon killing someone, Linley was instantly frightened and wanted to stop him.

"Watch carefully. Pretend my target is that flower vase in front of us," Cesar said calmly.

Cesar's previous attitude had totally changed. He became calm. In the blink of an eye, that lazy, indolent aura of Cesar's totally disappeared, and he became someone without a hint of an aura, without a hint of power, without a hint of emotion.

Cold. Calm.

Linley didn't see anything at all. He only felt the air tremble slightly, and then the flower vase in front of Linley suddenly started to disintegrate, one inch at a time.

Right. As clearly as can be, the flower vase had disintegrated, one inch at a time!

This sensation totally stunned Linley.

"So this is the King of Killers?" In Linley's mind, he firmly memorized this moment. When making his move, Cesar's expression hadn't changed in the slightest. At that moment, Cesar had seemed totally emotionless, and he had

coldly stared at everything in the manor. It was as though in his eyes, all life was nothing more than a blade of grass.

Killing someone was nothing more than cutting a blade of grass.

But Linley also had the feeling that, when Cesar had made his move, all of his attention had been focused on that flower vase.

As though the entire universe had been reduced to the flower vase, and nothing else had existed.

That strange, bizarre feeling made Linley want to vomit blood.

“Did you see it?” Cesar once more became energetic and animated. Casually sitting down, he crossed his legs and looked up at Linley. “What do you think? Do you agree that I look the manliest at that type of moment? I’ve relied on this technique to win the hearts of quite a few young ladies, you know.”

## Poison

Linley firmly etched this scene into his mind.

Faced with Cesar's questions, Linley nodded. "Very charismatic. I've already committed that scene to memory. However, I'm afraid it will be quite difficult for me to make a carving on the same level of 'Awakening From the Dream' again."

A 'Masterpiece' level sculpture appearing in the world was a rare event indeed.

In the past, Linley had been thoroughly heartbroken, and had poured all of his emotions into that carving, allowing himself to forget everything else in the world and attain that most mysterious of states. Only then was he able to complete such a sculpture. For him, in his current state, to attempt to carve another sculpture of that level was virtually impossible.

"As long as you, Master Linley, are the sculptor, I'll be satisfied. I don't ask that it be on the same level as 'Awakening From the Dream', only that it is on the same level as most master-level sculptures," Cesar said with a laugh.

Linley nodded.

If that was the case, Linley had total confidence in his abilities.

"Mr. Cesar, how about this. I will produce the sculpture you requested in about a month. What do you say?" Actually, Linley only needed three days, but he wanted to give himself sufficient time.

Cesar nodded. "Alright. One month is a very short period of time. I'm not in a hurry. I have all the time in the world. Haha."

"Master Linley, if you have anything you want me to help with, feel free to tell me. As long as I can accomplish it, I will definitely do it for you," Cesar said magnanimously.

Linley couldn't help but feel rather nervous.

With Patterson killed by him, the only target in Linley's mind now was Clayde. To kill or to capture Clayde wasn't something which Linley was currently capable of.

But Cesar, the King of Killers, definitely was capable!

"Mr. Cesar, if I were to ask you to capture one of the rulers of a kingdom belonging to the Holy Union, would you agree?" Linley resisted the urge to be rash, and instead first sounded Cesar out.

Cesar was startled. He stared questioningly at Linley. "Capture a king?"

Linley nodded heavily. "Yes."

Cesar frowned. After a short pause, he looked at Linley. "How about this. Let me ask you something first. If I were to help you capture this ruler, would you kill him?"

"Most likely!" Linley replied honestly.

Lying to a 'King of Killers' would most likely be quite unwise. As for killing Clayde, if his mother really had died in Clayde's hands, how could Linley not seek vengeance?

Linley had a dark premonition. There had been no trace of his mother for so many years. Most likely, she was dead, or perhaps imprisoned somewhere. No matter what the case, he would seek vengeance for his mother.

"Kill a king?" Cesar looked at Linley.

Linley looked back with hope in his eyes.

In Cesar's heart, he understood that although in terms of status, a Cardinal was somewhat more important than a King, the impact caused by the murder of a King would be greater than that caused by the murder of a Cardinal.

A dead Cardinal could instantly be replaced by the Radiant Church.

But the death of a King would cause countless battles and strife within a kingdom. At the same time, the Radiant Church would yet again be unhappy with him.

“This request of yours... forgive me for being unable to fulfill it.” Cesar looked seriously at Linley. “Linley, the impact caused by the murder of a King is too great. And, this entire time, the Radiant Church has treated me quite well. I don’t wish to set the Radiant Church and my Sabre organization up as enemies just for the sake of a sculpture.”

Behind Cesar, the King of Killers, was the Saber organization, one of the four great assassin’s guilds.

Cesar knew what was important and what was not.

A single sculpture wasn’t worth allowing cracks to appear in the friendly relationship between himself and the Radiant Church. All these years, the Radiant Church had treated him with courtesy, something Cesar understood in his heart. He couldn’t be a selfish wolf who repaid the Church’s kindness by acting against one of their kings.

“Change your request,” Cesar said apologetically.

Linley suddenly felt powerless. Perhaps in terms of power, Cesar didn’t care about Clayde at all, but Clayde’s status had convinced Cesar to stay his hand.

Linley forced himself to remain calm.

“Mr. Cesar, I would like to ask, do you have any method by which I, a magus of the seventh rank, can kill a combatant of the ninth rank,” Linley asked.

Cesar glanced at Linley. After a short silence, he said, “I have quite a few assassination methods. But one which would allow a magus of the seventh rank to assassinate a combatant of the ninth rank? This... is challenging.” As he spoke, Cesar began to consider this question. In the mind of this ‘King of Killers’ who hadn’t killed anyone in a long time, one assassination method after another began to speed through his mind.

Linley didn’t dare to disrupt Cesar’s train of thought. He stood there quietly.

Suddenly, Cesar turned to look at Linley. “The combatant of the ninth rank, would this be a warrior or a magus? If this person is a magus, I have a method.”

“Warrior,” Linley immediately said.

Dealing with a warrior and dealing with a magus required totally different



methods. Hearing Linley explain that this was a warrior of the ninth rank, Cesar's head began to hurt.

Linley could only wait there urgently.

"Oh. I have an idea." Cesar's eyes suddenly lit up, and he turned to Linley. "Haha, a long time ago, I stumbled upon this method by accident. I didn't imagine that eight hundred years later, I'd still remember it."

"What method?" Linley immediately grew excited.

Heavens!

This King of Killers actually had a way for a magus of the seventh rank to kill a warrior of the ninth rank.

"The King of Killers is full of assassination techniques. Indeed, he knows far more than I do in this field. Although, if I lived for five thousand more years, perhaps I would still know more than him." Doebling Cowart's voice rang out in Linley's mind.

Linley couldn't help but force a laugh. Grandpa Doebling never liked admitting inferiority to anyone.

"The method is..." Cesar smiled at Linley. "Using poison!"

"Using poison?"

Linley was startled. He thought it must've been some sort of good method... but a king's food was always tasted and tested. How could using poison be effective?

"Master Linley, don't underestimate the power of poison. The art of using poison is an extremely deep, subtle method of assassination. This world is filled with countless ingredients, which can be used to make countless types of poisons. Who in this world can dare say that he knows all of the poisons in the world? Or that he can detect any sort of poison?"

Linley couldn't help but nod.

He agreed with this. For example, Doebling Cowart knew about using Blueheart Grass to counteract the forceful effects of dragon's blood.

“This poison that I’m talking about was specially designed for use against warriors. As long as the warrior is not at the Saint level, upon being affected by this poison, his strength will decrease by more than 90%. What’s more, to this very day, there’s been no antidote invented for this poison. Only by spending a year of time can one slowly use his battle-qi to purge the poison from his system.” Cesar clearly had a very clear memory regarding this poison. “And this poison is both odorless and tasteless. There’s no way to detect it at all. Only after having been poisoned would one realize that one had ingested it.”

Less than 10% of strength would remain? No way to test for it?

Linley’s eyes lit up.

Clayde was nothing more than a warrior of the ninth rank. Once he was impacted by this poison, based on Linley’s current level of power, wouldn’t he be able to easily trample Clayde into the ground?

“Do you have this poison, Mr. Cesar?” Linley quickly asked.

Linley could guess that this poison was extremely rare and valuable. That was without question. A poison which was effective against all warriors short of the Saint level, and which was odorless, tasteless, and undetectable, would of course rare and precious. If not, all the warriors in the world would be dead already. “Master Linley, didn’t you hear what I just said? This is something I recalled learning about eight hundred years ago. I just glanced at that recipe back then. After all, this poison was of no use or threat to me.” Cesar frowned. “I only know this poison was primarily formed from eight major ingredients, but I don’t recall the exact ingredients clearly.”

“You don’t remember?” Linley was so frantic, he could kill someone.

Cesar laughed towards Linley. “Master Linley, don’t worry. Although I’m not sure, the recipe for this poison was stored within my organization long ago. I can order some people to make a copy of it and bring it to me. However, the base of my Saber organization is in a place with very few people. From here to there and back, most likely it would take a month or two of time.”

A month or two. That was acceptable!

Linley nodded towards Cesar. “Mr. Cesar, might I ask if your organization has

any of this poison already in stock?” Linley didn’t want to waste time looking for ingredients to mix the potion.

“We do not.” Cesar shook his head. “In this entire world, perhaps only the Deathgod’s Hands has this poison in stock.”

“Deathgod’s Hands?”

In the past, while chatting with Yale, the topic of conversation had turned to the four major assassin’s guilds. These were known as Saber, Bloodrose, Scarlet Moon, and Deathgod’s Hands. Each assassin’s guild had its own specialty. The Deathgod’s Hands specialized in using all sorts of queer, exotic assassination techniques.

“Right. In the past, if it weren’t for the fact that the Deathgod’s Hands had a favor to ask of me, perhaps they wouldn’t have given a copy of such a precious recipe to my organization.” Cesar nodded.

Something which could kill virtually any warrior below the Saint-rank. The value of such a poison was unimaginable.

“Then... would it be possible for me to purchase this poison from the Deathgod’s Hands?” Linley said hopefully.

“Impossible.” Cesar laughed. “The Ten Ultimate Poisons of the Deathgod’s Hands is something they never give to any other organizations. The reason they gave us this recipe was probably because they expected that we would never actually use it.”

“Never use it?” Linley looked questioningly at Cesar.

“Because the price is simply too high. It isn’t worth it.” Cesar chuckled. “Two of the ingredients, in particular, have already been totally cornered off the market by the Deathgod’s Hands. The price of the poison would most likely be more than the commission of the assassination mission.”

Linley understood.

But to him, no matter how much gold it cost, it would be worth it.

“How about this. I’ll go back now, and arrange for some people to deliver a copy of this recipe to you. But Master Linley, a month from now, you need to

have my sculpture ready.” Cesar laughed as he spoke to Linley.

“Of course.” Linley felt a knot in his heart unclench.

After sending off Cesar, Linley, who had been worrying this entire time about how to deal with Clayde, finally relaxed. That night, he finally had a sound rest and a beautiful dream, something very rare for him.

That next afternoon.

Linley was calmly seated cross-legged on the grass, cultivating his Dragonblood battle-qi. That azure-black Dragonblood battle-qi in his body was constantly roiling about, as the unique power of the Dragonblood constantly was drawn deep into Linley’s bones, muscles, and tendons, causing his body to become more and more powerful.

Linley believed that if he continued at this rate, there would come the day that his body would be as powerful as that of a real, Saint-level dragon. He would resurrect the fallen glory of the Dragonblood Warriors.

“Lord Linley.” A female attendant’s voice from outside.

Linley took a deep breath, allowing the Dragonblood battle-qi to return to his dantian.

“Enter,” Linley said calmly.

Only then did this serving woman come in. Respectfully, she said, “Lord Linley, there are several guests from the Debs clan outside. They say they have come to thank you, Lord Linley.”

“Thank me?” Linley was momentarily stunned.

But then, Linley quickly understood. Clayde had given him face and freed Kalan Debs.

“Thank me? I’m afraid it isn’t as simple as that,” Linley said to himself.

There was a better than 80% to 90% chance that the Debs clan, seeing Linley help out once, had shamelessly come to ask for Linley’s help to save the Debs clan yet again.

“Let them enter.” Knowing of the existence of the poison, Linley now felt

much calmer and more assured of himself. With his mind relaxed, he now had the leisure and patience to pay attention to the affairs of the Debs clan.

“The Debs clan? Even if they aren’t exterminated, they’ll be totally beaten down.” Linley could already totally predict the future of the Debs clan.

Within the main hall.

Nimitz was the leader of this delegation. Kalan’s two uncles, Kalan himself, Rowling, and Alice were the members of this six-person delegation. No one in Nimitz’s delegation had dared to sit. They all were standing respectfully.

Seeing Linley walk towards them from afar, Nimitz and the others immediately smiled, and Nimitz even cupped his hands in salute. “Lord Linley!”

“I just finished my training exercises. If you could just wait a moment, I’ll take a quick bath and change my clothes first,” Linley said with a faint smile. And then, no longer paying any attention to the courtesies being paid to him by Nimitz and the others, he headed directly to another room on the other side of the hall.

Nimitz and the others were briefly stunned, but they could only smile and stand there, respectfully awaiting his return.

## The Trial

Nimitz, Kalan's two uncles, Kalan himself, Rowling, and Alice didn't dare to seat themselves with their host absent. They simply waited quietly in the main hall.

"Kalan, when Lord Linley returns, you must remember to be a bit more humble." Nimitz glared coldly at Kalan.

Kalan nodded. "Second Granduncle, I know."

In actuality, Kalan's heart was still filled with enmity towards Linley. After knowing the reason why he had been released from jail, he felt even more rage towards Linley!

"I would rather stay in that jail than have Alice go beg him!" Kalan's heart was filled with fury.

In the past, when Linley and Alice had been together, Kalan began to hate Linley. After he took Alice back, he felt a bit smug. In his eyes, although Linley was quite formidable, when compared to his Debs clan, Linley was not even close to being on the same level. But after just a few months, Linley's status had totally changed, becoming the brightest star within the Kingdom of Fenlai at one leap. Even his Majesty the King of Fenlai, and Cardinals of the Radiant Church, treated Linley with warmth. Even his own father acted so humbly towards Linley. All this filled Kalan's heart with even more hatred.

They were both young men. Why was he so inferior?

Especially this time!

He had languished in prison. Although he ended up escaping, it had required Alice, the woman he loved dearest, to go beg Linley to free him.

This caused Kalan to feel humiliated. He very much wanted to not accept Linley's kindness and continue to stay in that jail. How he wished he could

angrily curse at Linley, or even kill Linley!

But for the sake of the clan, he, Kalan, had come humbly to Linley's manor, and couldn't even act the slightest bit disrespectfully.

Footsteps could be heard.

Kalan immediately cast aside his angry musings. Forcing a smile onto his face, he made himself appear courteous and modest.

"Forgive me for keeping everyone waiting." Linley's clear voice rang out.

Nimitz and the others all turned to look. Clearly, Linley had just washed. His hair was wet, and he was casually wearing a loose robe.

"You can all sit." Linley comfortably sat down, gesturing casually with one hand.

Nimitz and the others all quickly expressed their thanks, then sat down. Nimitz was the first to smile and say, "Lord Linley, the purpose of our visit this time was to thank you. If it wasn't for you, Kalan most likely wouldn't have been able to get out this quickly. Kalan, hurry up and thank Lord Linley!"

Kalan was forced to rise to his feet again. Suppressing the anger in his heart, he forced himself to act humbly. "Thank you, Lord Linley."

Linley smiled at Kalan. "Kalan. No need to thank me."

"Mr. Nimitz. Very shortly, I'll have to attend to some important affairs. I don't know if you had any other purposes behind this visit? If you do, I hope you can speak of them now." Linley smiled towards Nimitz.

In truth, Linley simply didn't want to waste any time with these people. His time was meant to be reserved for training.

Nimitz was startled, but then he quickly adjusted. In a low voice, he said, "Lord Linley, our Debs clan has been framed and falsely accused of engaging in the smuggling of water jade. At this point, it's very possible that our Debs clan will be entirely eradicated. Thus, our clan would like to beg you, Lord Linley, for your assistance. Once our clan overcomes this critical threat, we definitely will not forget your great kindness to us."

As he spoke, Nimitz pulled out a black box from his side.

“Lord Linley, this is a very small gift from us to you as our thanks for your rescuing of Kalan. If our clan manages to survive this tribulation safely, we will once again show our gratitude towards you.” Nimitz sincerely held out that black box for Linley to look at.

“Swish.”

The little Shadowmouse, Bebe, suddenly scurried in front of Nimitz, and actually directly grabbed the box, then jumped onto Linley’s legs, planning on opening it up.

“Bebe!” Linley let out a low shout.

Bebe raised his head, staring at Linley unhappily. He didn’t open the box, only let out a few ‘hmph’ sounds, then fell silent.

“Mr. Nimitz, Bebe is rather naughty and mischievous. I’ll accept this gift, then, and offer my thanks to you.” Laughing, Linley put the black box off to one side, not even glancing at it.

Nimitz could sense that Linley was getting impatient.

Immediately, Nimitz glanced meaningfully at his companions, then was the first to stand up and bow. “Lord Linley, we won’t disturb you any further. This case involving our Debs clan will be tried a month from now. I hope that at that time, you can assist us, Lord.”

Linley casually nodded.

Nimitz and the others immediately left. That entire time, neither Alice nor Rowling had said a single word. Nimitz was the primary speaker.

Watching the group leave, Linley laughed coldly. “Nimitz, you old scoundrel. Did you think that by bringing Alice, I’d give you more face?” Linley flipped open the cover to the black box. Within it was a magiccrystal card and a letter.

“A letter?”

As he toyed with the letter in his hands, a burst of flame suddenly erupted from his palms, incinerating it and turning it to ash. Linley couldn’t be bothered reading the letter.

Time passed quickly. September arrived.



This entire past month, Linley had focused on his training. His strength, agility, and other aspects of his body had all improved. The Dragonblood battle-qi in his dantian had become more pure as well.

Linley had the feeling that he had reached the late-stage of the seventh rank.

As far as his growth in spiritual energy, although Linley's advancement rate was extremely rapid, even a genius would normally need around twenty years of training to advance from the seventh rank to the eighth rank. Despite his rapid improvement, a few months of growth wasn't very noticeable.

The path of the magus was indeed a long, difficult one.

Within the Hot Springs Garden, the shadow of a chisel could be seen, and a human-shaped sculpture was becoming more and more clearly defined. Bits of rubble flew about in every direction, falling onto the grass. Suddenly, Linley came to a halt, withdrawing his chisel.

"Whew. Finally done." Looking at the sculpture in front of him, Linley nodded with satisfaction.

This sculpture, which Linley had named the 'King of Killers', had truly cost Linley a great deal of effort. Each time, Linley had forced himself to totally enter the right state, so as to more perfectly carve out the statue of Cesar making his move.

The statue in front of him was as tall as a person.

Those two cold, calm eyes in particular gave people the sensation of being watched by a god. The aura emanating from this sculpture was the aura of a God of Death. Under the gaze of this sculpture, viewers would unconsciously feel a terrible, cold dread.

"Although this sculpture isn't comparable to 'Awakening From the Dream', it is the most perfect statue that I can make while in a normal state." Linley was extremely satisfied with this sculpture. He had spent an entire month on it, carefully, attentively sculpting. At last, it was completed.

Putting down his straight chisel, Linley soaked for a while in the hot springs, then put on a loose robe and sat on top of a chair. He was eating the breakfast which his attendants had brought him.

“Linley.” Doehring Cowart flew out by his side.

“Grandpa Doehring.” Linley looked at Doehring Cowart.

Laughing, Doehring Cowart said, “Linley, there’s two days left before the trial of the Debs clan’s case. Do you plan to go watch?”

“The trial?” Linley was startled.

This month, he had been absorbed in his bitter training. Linley had totally forgotten about everything else, including the Debs clan’s case. If it weren’t for Doehring Cowart’s reminder, Linley probably wouldn’t have remembered it at all.

“Yes, of course I’ll go.” A hint of a smile was on Linley’s face.



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Year 9999 of the Yulan calendar. September 9th. Within the Blackwater Jail of Fenlai City.

The Blackwater Jail was the most famous jail in the Kingdom of Fenlai, and it was the most securely guarded jail. The cases awaiting trial at the Blackwater Jail were also the most important cases in Fenlai.

Within the Blackwater Jail’s courtyard, today there were many nobles congregating. Even his Majesty, King Clayde, had arrived, and was seated to the side, watching. Naturally, Linley came today as well.

“Lord Linley.” One noble after another greeted him warmly.

“Linley, come, sit with me.” Seated in front, Clayde gestured toward Linley. Linley smiled at Clayde, then walked over.

Linley sat down next to Clayde.

Merritt, his hair gleaming, sat at the judge’s seat. His waist and back were ramrod straight. He really did give the impression of being fair and impartial. “Everyone, please sit.” Merritt nodded and smiled towards the noble spectators who had gathered here. In particular, Merritt smiled modestly towards the direction of Linley and Clayde.

The noble spectators all sat down quietly. Today, more than ten people had come from the Debs clan. All of them were seated together, nervously watching the proceedings.

“Bring Bernard,” Merritt ordered directly.

Very soon, under escort by two soldiers, Bernard was dragged to the court, hands and feet both shackled.

Merritt glanced at a nearby official, who quickly strode forward. In a loud voice, he proclaimed, “Duke Patterson, when he was the Minister of Finance, acted in many ways against the benefit of the kingdom. In particular, he is suspected of colluding with the Debs clan in the smuggling of water jade. The scale of this smuggling operation is larger than any since the founding of our Kingdom of Fenlai. We have already discovered that the valuation of the smuggled water jade was greater than fifty million gold coins!”

In actuality, the Debs clan had just begun their smuggling program. Although the valuation was fifty million gold coins, in reality, the Debs clan had only spent a few million gold coins thus far. From this, one could tell what enormous profits lay in the smuggling trade.

But just as their smuggling activities had begun, Duke Patterson had died, resulting in this being revealed.

The official continued, “Based on our investigations, one of the main organizers of this smuggling activity jumped into the river, while the other two were the brothers Lanseer and Langmuir.”

Finishing, the official sat back down.

Merritt looked at Bernard. “Bernard, do you have something to say for yourself?”

Bernard nodded. “Yes, lord, I do. First of all, it was not our Debs clan which engaged in smuggling. Secondly, the Lanseer brothers had been expelled by our clan long ago. Thirdly, the primary mover behind this smuggling operation should’ve been that person you said jumped into the river. There is no link to our Debs clan at all.”

Merritt nodded and laughed. “The organizer of this smuggling operation was

your third brother. And you say this has nothing to do with you?"

"Third brother? My third brother is still adventuring in the wilds. How would he have the chance to engage in smuggling?" Bernard continued to insist on this point.

"Your third brother is engaging in adventuring?" Merritt's face grew cold. "Then let me ask you, if your third brother is outside adventuring, then why, despite me ordering your Debs clan to summon him back, hasn't he returned after such a long period of time?"

Bernard said confidently, "My third brother is adventuring in other kingdoms. Most likely, he's travelled too far. It is normal for us to need more than a year to find him."

Merritt glanced at Bernard, chuckled, then said coldly, "Bring in Catson and the other two."

"Catson?" Bernard was suspicious. Who was Catson and who were the other two?"

Very shortly, three very cowering youths entered the court, falling to their knees immediately as they said respectfully, "Greetings, Lord."

These three youths clearly were peasants who had seen very little of the world before.

Merritt said calmly, "Catson, clearly explain what you saw happen."

"Yes, Lord," the leader of the youths said respectfully. "On June 28th, we three bros were fishing on the river, but suddenly, we saw a richly dressed noble lord clutching onto a dead tree trunk float by us. This noble was covered in blood and had already passed out."

Upon hearing these words, the expression on Bernard's face changed.

"The day that we pursued the leader of the smugglers was June 28th as well. As it just so happened, the leader jumped into the river." Merritt looked at Bernard. "Bernard, are you willing to admit guilt yet?"

"My third brother is adventuring in distant lands. He definitely wasn't organizing any smuggling activities. My Debs clan is definitely innocent."

Bernard still held his head up high and maintained his innocence.

Merritt laughed coldly, then said, “Bring Kanter Debs.”

Hearing the name ‘Kanter Debs’, the faces of Bernard as well as the members of the Debs clan present all immediately turned white.

## The Enormous Fine

“This Kanter Debs should be that third brother of the Debs clan.” Clayde laughed softly towards Linley, and Linley nodded. Linley and Clayde merely watched these proceedings, while the Debs clan’s members all felt terror.

All of those viewers from the Debs clan were now so nervous that they were trembling.

“Clatter!”

The sound of shackles rattling could be heard, as under the escort of two soldiers, a thin, ashen-faced, golden-haired middle-aged man entered the court. The gazes of everyone in the court were drawn towards him, including Bernard, Kalan, and Nimitz.

Seeing that golden-haired man appear, Bernard let out a long sigh, then shut his eyes.

“It really is the third brother of the Debs clan, Kanter!” From the watcher’s gallery, the sound of discussion could be heard. Many of the nobles present recognized and knew Kanter Debs, due to his position within the Debs clan.

By now, the Debs clan had no further hope of trying to dissemble.

Seated up in the magistrate’s chair, Merritt looked towards Clayde, who nodded.

“Bernard.” Merritt looked at Bernard. “As things stand, do you still have something to say for yourself?”

But Bernard didn’t look at Merritt. He turned his head to look at his third brother, Kanter, fixing Kanter with his gaze. Kanter, too, was staring at his elder brother Bernard. The gazes of these two brothers met.

“Third bro, why did you do this?” There was disbelief in Bernard’s eyes, as pain and rage caused his entire body to shake.

“I’m sorry,” Kanter said softly.

Bernard laughed bitterly, then shook his head. In a solemn voice, he said, “It isn’t me you should be sorry to. It’s the entire Debs clan. How many years has the Debs clan existed? It was only thanks to countless generations of hard work and effort by our ancestors that we enjoy our current level of success. But you... you...” Bernard was in so much pain that he couldn’t speak.

“Thud!”

Kanter fell to his knees within the court, and two streams of tears began to flow.

“Big brother, I deserve to die!”

He slapped his face severely with his shackled hands. Crying miserably, he said, “Big brother, I’m sorry. This is all my fault. I was greedy and wasn’t satisfied with that little bit of authority and wealth I had within the Debs clan. That’s why I used the clan’s gold to engage in this smuggling operation. This is all my fault. Big brother! This is all my fault!”

This scene startled everyone present.

Linley and Clayde both raised an eyebrow, while the sentencing magistrate, Merritt, frowned.

“Since things have already developed to this extent...” Bernard raised his head, forcing his tears to stop. He seemed very desolate. “Third bro, it’s no longer a question of whose fault it is. Your actions have caused our entire clan to be in danger of annihilation. I, Bernard Debs, as this generation’s leader of the Debs clan, will not be able to face our ancestors, even in death.”

As he spoke, Bernard’s tears once more began to fall.

Bernard suddenly turned to look at Clayde, kneeling in his direction. Crying miserably, he said, “Your Majesty. It is the greatest misfortune possible for our Debs clan to have given birth to this miserable, petty traitor to the kingdom. As the leader of the Debs clan, I, Bernard Debs, cannot escape responsibility. I, Bernard, am willing to use my death in order to beg you, your Majesty, to spare the Debs clan. After all, the vast majority of people within our clan are innocent!”

Clayde looked at Bernard.

And then he looked at Merritt, nodding once.

Merritt understood Clayde's intentions. Immediately, he called out, "Fifteen-minute recess! Fifteen minutes later, we will announce the final sentence!"



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All of the nobles present had to leave the court, and could only come back fifteen minutes later. The direction this case was heading towards had become very clear. As for how the Debs clan would be punished for its crime of smuggling, that was totally up to his Majesty.

Such a large-scale smuggling operation could definitely impact the entire clan. Even if the clan was exterminated, it would be understandable.

But of course, Clayde could also be more benevolent and merely punish the Debs clan but allow it to survive.

The result would be entirely up to Clayde.



\*

Outside the court, Duke Bonalt was chatting with Linley.

"Linley, did you see that? These main branch descendants of the Debs clan are really quite good. That Kanter had been captured quite a few days ago. But, instead of committing suicide, he waited until today to put on that show just now." Duke Bonalt laughed.

Linley nodded in praise as well.

"If Kanter had killed himself, then the Debs clan would be in an even worse, more passive situation." Linley laughed as well.

If Kanter had committed suicide, then his corpse would have been used as evidence proving the guilt of the Debs clan in engaging in smuggling. The Debs clan would have had no way to argue against it. But now, Kanter himself was



acknowledging that he had acted alone, giving the Debs clan a chance at life.

But of course, whether or not the Debs clan would live was entirely up to his Majesty.

“Kill’em, kill’em all.” Bebe, on Linley’s shoulders, bared his fangs while mentally speaking to Linley. “This Debs clan is too good at playing games. I, Bebe, can’t stomach them.”

Hearing this, Linley couldn’t help but laugh.

“Squeaaaaak.”

The door to the court opened. Fifteen minutes had passed. All of the nobles outside made their way back into the court, all of them quietly assuming their previous positions. Just then, the only people present in the court had been Merritt, King Clayde, and a few other people.

“Linley, take a guess. How do you think I will sentence him?” Clayde smiled towards Linley.

“No clue,” Linley replied succinctly.

Clayde grinned secretively.

“All rise!”

Saying these words, Merritt rose solemnly, and all of the nobles in the court followed his lead. His head raised high, Merritt said in a solemn, clear voice, “This is the sentence of this court: Kanter Debs, a member of the Debs clan, did flagrantly engage in the large-scale smuggling of a huge quantity of water jade, and is therefore sentenced to execution by hanging, with the sentence to be carried out on October 11th.”

“The total value of this smuggling operation was in excess of forty million gold coins. We sentence the Debs clan to receive a punitive fine of double that amount, eighty million gold coins. Bernard Debs is to be released. Court adjourned!” After hearing these words from Merritt, Bernard, Kalan, and Nimitz all let out a sigh of relief, but in their hearts, they felt very helpless.

Eighty million gold coins!

What a terrifying sum!

The entire net worth of the Debs clan was only around a hundred million gold coins, and that was including all of their illiquid assets. For them to be able to pay such a huge fine would certainly require them to sell off many of their illiquid assets. Such a large-scale auction, in turn, would definitely result in a great deal of lowballing and haggling from the buyers.

Although their illiquid assets were worth eighty million gold coins, the chances of them actually receiving eighty million gold coins was really too low.

“Linley, what do you think?” Clayde looked at Linley.

Linley laughed and nodded. “Admirably done, admirably done.”

The fine which Clayde had levied against the Debs clan was carefully calibrated, precisely because the valuation of the Debs clan’s illiquid assets were worth around eighty million or so. If Clayde really were to sentence the Debs clan to extermination, then without a doubt, he wouldn’t have been able to get his hands on a single coin of their liquid assets.

But if the penalty fine was too high, perhaps the Debs clan would even risk extinction rather than pay the fine.

The fine of eighty million gold coins was neither too high nor too little. It was just right.

“Father.” Kalan and the others instantly went to help Bernard to his feet.

But Bernard only stared at his third brother, Kanter. A gloomy, calm look was on Kanter’s face. He only nodded towards Bernard. After he had been exposed in leading the smuggling operation, Kanter knew that he would die, without a question. But now that he was dying on behalf of the clan, the clan would most likely treat his son and his wife well.

Bernard nodded towards Kanter as well.

Two brothers. From a single exchange of glances, they knew what the other was thinking.

“Let us... go back,” Bernard said with a sigh.

After experiencing this tribulation, the Debs clan had suffered a major blow to its vitality. At absolute best, they would have a tenth of the economic power

they previously had. From this day forward... the Debs clan had toppled from its previous position of power at the highest levels in the Kingdom of Fenlai. They could only be considered a fairly wealthy clan, now.”



\*

Within Linley’s manor, in the Hot Springs Garden.

Linley was seated on a chair, quietly staring blankly.

“Linley, what are you pondering?” Doebling Cowart came out of the Coiling Dragon ring.

Linley glanced at Doebling Cowart. Sighing, he said, “Today, when I saw the Debs clan be sentenced, I suddenly thought of my own clan. My clan was once a clan which dominated the entire Yulan continent, but now, after all these generations, who is left? My father died, and my mother’s whereabouts are unknown. Little Wharton is now in the O’Brien Empire. In the entire Holy Union, I am alone with no kin.”

Linley was gripped by a powerful, lonely melancholy.

His parents were gone, and he was engaged in a mission of revenge that couldn’t be revealed!

On this road to revenge, Linley’s heart was tightly spun up, and he didn’t dare to slacken off in the slightest.

Looking at Linley, Doebling Cowart felt a surge of pity. Although superficially Linley seemed very mature, and didn’t have any problems at all dealing with those important nobles... Linley was still only seventeen years old this year. He had just graduated from the magus academy not too long ago.

“Linley, relax. Don’t give yourself too much pressure. You have plenty of time.” Doebling Cowart encouraged him.

Linley looked at Doebling Cowart. On this lonely road he had been travelling, it was good that he had Grandpa Doebling with him, along with that mischievous rascal, Bebe.

“Thank you, Grandpa Doehring,” Linley said gratefully.

Doehring Cowart began to chuckle.

“I really want to know what happened to my mother as soon as possible. I want to kill Clayde as soon as possible.” Even if they ignored the fact that Clayde had abducted his mother, the fact that he had caused his mother to be separated from their family for over ten years, resulting in the death of Linley’s father, meant that without a doubt, Clayde had to die.

“Who knows when that ‘King of Killers’, Cesar, will bring that poison recipe.” Linley was beginning to grow impatient.



\*

Each day, Linley had been urgently awaiting the return of Cesar, the ‘King of Killers’. But each day passed with no news of Cesar. Time passed, and in the blink of an eye, it was now October. During this past month, the Kingdom of Fenlai had been fairly tranquil. The only major affair was the large-scale auction carried out by the Debs clan.

Many clans seized the opportunity to try to haggle with or lowball the Debs clan. However, the value of the Debs clan’s illiquid assets really were very high, so there were quite a few bidders from other clans as well. Thus, the price at auction wasn’t too low, in the end. The assets, previously valued at around eighty million gold coins, ended up selling for around seventy million gold in total.

After paying the fine of eighty million gold coins, the Debs clan could finally be considered as having escaped from danger.

But after this affair, the net worth of the Debs clan had essentially shrunk by 90%.



\*

October 10th was the day before Kanter’s execution. This day, Linley

remained in the Hot Springs Garden, training as he always did.

“Lord Linley, Lord Cesar has come!” A female attendant called out in a high-pitched voice from outside!

Linley had instructed that he must be immediately alerted if Cesar came.

“Cesar came?” Linley quickly threw on some clothes and immediately rushed out of the Hot Springs Garden. Given Linley’s current speed, in ten seconds, he arrived outside the main hall. Right now, Cesar, still dressed in those long, loose robes, was seated lazily with one leg crossed. He was drinking a cup of tea.

“Mr. Cesar.” Linley called out from afar. Three steps later, Linley entered the main hall.

Seeing Linley, Cesar’s eyes lit up, and he immediately rose to his feet. “Master Linley, my truest apologies for only coming today.” As he spoke, Cesar withdrew an envelope from his clothes. “Linley, this is the recipe I mentioned. It’s all yours.”

## The Bloodrupture Poison

Linley looked at the two female attendants outside the main hall. He called out coldly, "Leave. Without my orders, no one is to be permitted inside."

"Yes, milord."

The hearts of those two female attendants shook, and they quickly left.

"Master Linley, you are quite cautious." Cesar laughed.

Linley felt helpless.

Cautious?

How could he not be cautious? He was going to use this recipe to kill Clayde.

"This Cesar probably knew all along that I am intending to kill Clayde." Linley understood this point. Previously, he had told Cesar that he wanted to kill one of the six rulers of the kingdoms of the Holy Union. And then, he said he wanted to kill a warrior of the ninth rank.

As long as Cesar wasn't a total idiot, he would easily be able to connect these two points to understand that Linley wanted to kill a king of the Holy Union who was also a warrior of the ninth rank. In the entire Holy Union, the only one who fit these criteria was Clayde.

"Cesar, this old freak, wouldn't go curry favor with Clayde by selling me out." Linley felt quite confident.

What sort of person was Cesar? Would he deal with someone like Linley using tricks like these?

"Linley, you do indeed have to be careful. That person you intend to deal with is highly valued by the Radiant Church," Cesar said in a low voice by Linley's side. "And he has many guards as well. If you are to try and poison him, it will be quite hard."

Linley glanced at Cesar. “Thank you for your advice, Mr. Cesar.”

Poison Clayde?

If Linley was willing to risk his life, he definitely would be able to succeed. All he had to do was to invite Clayde to his manor, and then serve Clayde some wine. In his own manor, lacing the wine was an extremely easy task. But if he did this, he would be revealing himself as the perpetrator.

He had to find an opportunity to kill Clayde without anyone knowing about it.

Such an opportunity was quite rare.

“I can’t always rely on being lucky, like that time with Patterson insisting on meeting with me in secret,” Linley said to himself. That private, secret meeting with Patterson really was an unexpected, wonderful surprise for Linley, but such surprises could only be wished for, not relied upon.

As he was considering this, Linley opened the envelope.

There was a piece of paper within the envelope, filled with countless words.

“Drug name: Bloodrupture Poison

Ingredients: Astralagus fruit, white ginseng, turmeric, fog grass, cloud fungus, bitterskin, cardamon kernels, Blueheart Grass.

Effect: Bloodrupture poison, when dissolved into wine or water, has no odor and no taste. To this date, no way of detecting it has been discovered. Once it is ingested, it will seep into the blood and then into the dantian, preventing battle-qi from being generated, causing a warrior to have less than 10% of his strength left. Anyone below the Saint-rank is vulnerable to this poison, and there is no cure. Only by using battle-qi over a long period of time to cleanse the poison from the bloodstream can one cure one’s self.

Instructions: In order to produce one gram of Bloodrupture poison, one needs to have thirty grams of Astralagus fruit, twelve grams of white ginseng, ten grams of turmeric, fifteen grams of fog grass, twelve grams of cloud fungus, one gram of bitterskin, twelve grams of cardamon kernels, and one gram of Blueheart Grass. First use the twelve grams of ginseng, the fifteen grams of fog grass, and the gram of bitterskin. Place them into the alchemist’s pot and boil

them until the fog grass begins to emit whit mist, then stop. Filter out the concentrated juice, then place it into the mixing pot and add in the Blueheart Grass, the turmeric, and the cardamon kernels...

Storage method: \*\*\*”

This paper very clearly detailed every aspect of the manufacture and usage of the Bloodrupture poison. Just from examining the concocting procedures, Linley quickly understood how difficult it would be to produce this poison. If a single mistake was made in any of the procedures, the entire potion would be worthless.

The way to store it and preserve it was also very complicated.

The cost of a unit of Bloodrupture poison was more than a million times that of an equivalent weight of gold.

“Of the eight ingredients required to concoct this Bloodrupture poison, five of them aren’t that rare. Astralagus fruit, white ginseng, turmeric, bitterskin, and cardamon kernels. The prices of these five shouldn’t be considered too high for you. But the other three are very rare. That fog grass generally only grows in the far eastern plains, east of the Four Great Empires. It is extremely rare, and is rarely found in the marketplace. As for the other two ingredients, their rarity is even greater than that of fog grass!” Cesar explained carefully.

“Both Blueheart Grass and cloud fungus are virtually un-purchasable and cannot be found in the market, even if you have money. Supposedly, a while ago, someone tried to offer a hundred thousand gold coins to buy Blueheart Grass, but still was not able to do so. Cloud fungus, as well, hasn’t appeared in the market for a long time.”

Cesar patted Linley on his shoulders comfortingly. “Linley, it will take you quite a bit of effort to gather these eight ingredients.”

Linley still felt a degree of confidence.

Of these eight ingredients, five wouldn’t pose any problem at all. As for fog grass, even though it was rare, it shouldn’t be too hard to buy it. As for Blueheart Grass... he had it already. There was no need to buy it. Right now, the only problem was the cloud fungus!



“Once I acquire the cloud fungus, I’ll be able to produce some Bloodrupture poison. And that day will be the day of Clayde’s death,” Linley said to himself.

Linley could no longer endure any longer. If in the future, he still couldn’t find an appropriate opportunity, he would go all out and kill Clayde, even if it meant exposing himself as the killer. If worst came to worst, he would go ask Yale for help and have the Dawson Conglomerate aid him in fleeing from the Holy Union.

Based on the influence and power of the Dawson Conglomerate, it wouldn’t be too hard for them to help Linley escape from the Holy Union.

“Right now, what’s important is finding these eight ingredients.” Linley was still very happy right now.

At least he now had a goal to work towards.

“Linley. Linley.” Cesar called out to him. “Ahem, Master Linley!”

“Uh?” Only now did Linley end his pondering and turn to look at Cesar. “Mr. Cesar, is there something you need?”

Cesar chortled. “Linley, are you perhaps forgetting something?”

Linley immediately understood. Laughing, he said, “Haha, Mr. Cesar, you are referring to the sculpture, right? I finished the sculpture you asked for a full month ago. Come, please, this way.” Linley immediately led Cesar towards a side room.

In the corner of this side room, there was a man-shaped sculpture which radiated a cold, killing aura. Those two eyes contained within them a disdain for all life and an arrogance that forced viewers to feel awe and terror.

As for the facial features, the facial details were carved even more accurately. The sculpture looked exactly like Cesar.

“Wonderful, wonderful!!!” Cesar was so excited, he said the word wonderful twice.

“Master Linley, you truly are a master sculptor. In such a short period of time, you were able to produce such a flawless sculpture. In my mind, this sculpture is ten thousand times better than even that ‘Awakening From the Dream’ of

yours.” Staring at his sculpture, Cesar was grinning so widely that his face threatened to split.

The more he looked at this sculpture, the happier Cesar felt.

“This King of Killers is perhaps a bit too narcissistic.” Seeing the grin on Cesar’s face, Linley couldn’t help but think this to himself.



\*

“Lord Linley.” A nearby housekeeper bowed politely.

Linley pulled out a piece of paper and handed it to the housekeeper. “Go purchase these twelve ingredients for me. The exact amount I need for each is written on the paper.”

“Yes, Lord Linley.” The housekeeper accepted the piece of paper.

Of the twelve ingredients on the list of paper, six of them were the ones which Linley needed, while the other six were just some normal, random ingredients Linley had scribbled on as well. Of the twelve ingredients, only fog grass was relatively expensive. As for the Blueheart Grass and cloud fungus which the Bloodrupture poison required, Linley didn’t even bother writing them down on this piece of paper.

Linley wasn’t actually worried about these ingredients being made public.

After all, the secret formula for Bloodrupture poison was one of the secret formulas of the Deathgod’s Hands. Aside from the Saber organization, most likely no one else knew this formula. And there were many other formulas that also used those ingredients.

After all, Linley didn’t write down the two most critical ingredients; Blueheart Grass and cloud fungus.

“Find and purchase these ingredients for me as soon as possible,” Linley instructed.

After giving his orders to the housekeeper, Linley immediately sent someone to invite Yale, Reynolds, and George to come meet with him at his manor.

Whenever they had a chance, the four bros would meet and have food together, thus this wasn't out of character for Linley.

The next morning.

This was the day of Kanter Debs' execution by hanging, but Linley couldn't be bothered to go watch. He was in his manor, drinking wine and chatting with his three bros. Only after they finished drinking did Linley bring up what he wished to discuss.

"Boss Yale, there's something I want to ask you to help me with," Linley said.

"Third Bro, just let me know what you need," Yale said boldly.

Linley withdrew a piece of paper. "Boss Yale, I need two types of ingredients. One is fog grass, the other is cloud fungus. These two herbs are extremely rare, and are virtually unavailable on the market. I was hoping you could help me, Yale." Yale was supported by the Dawson Conglomerate, after all.

As one of the three great trading unions of the Yulan continent, the Dawson Conglomerate was a massive organization with astonishing abilities.

It would be much simpler for them to look for cloud fungus and fog grass than for Linley to do so on his own.

"Two types of herbs? Don't worry about it. I'll handle it for you." His tongue slurred from wine, Yale pounded his chest and promised. At the same time, he took the piece of paper with the two herbs written down on it from Linley.

"I've seen fog grass at home when I was young. It is a very fun type of grass. Under the hot morning sun, it will emit white mist," Reynolds immediately said.

Linley's eyes lit up. However, Reynolds' clan was back in the O'Brien Empire. From his clan to the Kingdom of Fenlai would require at least a year of travelling time. Linley didn't have that much time to wait. Only if he absolutely couldn't find it would he be forced to wait patiently.

"How long would it take us, if we were to wait for you to get fog grass from your home, Fourth Bro?" Yale snickered. "Third Bro, I'll go talk to my Second Uncle right away and have him help you find these two ingredients."

Yale really did handle Linley's matters with high importance. That very day, he

went to find his Second Uncle.

That night, within a private deluxe room, the brown-haired Myron Dawson was casually draped in a bathrobe. Bare-chested, he was lying on a reclining chair, while two beautiful young ladies were by his side, attending to him.

“Second Uncle, Second Uncle!” Yale’s voice sounded out from the other side of the door.

Myron curled his lips helplessly. Stroking the fragrant hair of the two beauties, he chuckled. “My dears, the two of you can go outside and wait a while.” Those two beautiful women left the deluxe room very obediently, and then Yale rushed in.

“Yale, you are already a grown up now. How can you act like this?” Myron Dawson said with a frown.

Yale chortled. “Second Uncle, don’t be angry. I’ve come today to ask for your help with something. This is something on behalf of my Third Bro, Linley.”

“Your Third Bro? That Linley fellow?” Myron immediately sat up straight. “Go ahead, what is it?”

Yale withdrew that piece of paper from his clothes. “Second Uncle, my Third Bro is in urgent need of these two types of herbs, which is why I’d like to ask you, Second Uncle, to help out and see if we can find them.” As he spoke, he delivered the paper to Myron.

“Fog grass, cloud fungus?” Upon seeing the words on the paper, Myron Dawson nodded. “I’ll send some people to investigate and see if there’s any to be bought nearby.”

“Haha, thanks, Second Uncle!” Yale was excited. “Then I won’t disturb you, Second Uncle, from your festivities. I’ll leave now.”

“You little punk.” Myron Dawson chuckled, then looked back at the piece of paper. “Fog grass and cloud fungus? What does this Linley need these two ingredients for?”



Linley had to admit, the Dawson Conglomerate was an astonishingly efficient machine.

“Third Bro, within the various branches in the Holy Union of our Dawson Conglomerate, we only have a small amount of fog grass. As for cloud fungus, we had some a while ago, but it’s already been shipped towards our headquarters. The headquarters of the Dawson Conglomerate is the place where we have the most herbs and ingredients. Here, let me give this fog grass to you first.” Yale directly handed Linley a pouch.

Within the recipe, the amount of fog grass needed was measured in grams, but the pouch which Yale handed to Linley contained nine full clumps of fog grass. This amount was more than enough.

“So there’s no cloud fungus available?” Linley accepted the pouch.

Yale nodded. “Third Bro, if you are in a hurry, I can have my Second Uncle send experts to ride flying magical beasts to head to our headquarters as soon as possible. Riding flying beasts is quite fast. From here to our headquarters, three months is more than enough.”

## Breakthrough

Linley was silent for a moment, then smiled and nodded apologetically at Yale. “Boss Yale, sorry for the hassle.”

“It’s no hassle.” Yale chortled. “It’s just sending someone to make a delivery is all. No big deal. Our Dawson Conglomerate often sends people to deliver letters to the headquarters. We’ll get several things done.”

Linley nodded.

“Third Bro.” Yale’s voice became solemn as he looked at Linley. “Tell me the truth. Why are you in such a rush to get these herbs?”

If it were someone else asking him, Linley totally could’ve lied and claimed that he was using it to make a medical lotion which would help him increase the speed at which his body gained strength. After all, it wasn’t unheard of to bath in medicinal waters as part of training. But facing one of his bros, Linley didn’t wish to lie.

“Boss Yale, right now, I can’t tell you yet. When the time is right, I will tell you.” Linley patted Yale on the shoulders as he spoke.

The bros of dorm 1987 had been together since they were young. They ate together, lived together, played together. They were as close as real brothers.

“Understood, Third Bro. But if you need anything at all, make sure you let me know.” Yale didn’t ask anything else.

The next day, Linley’s housekeeper brought over the herbs which Linley had asked for, except he hadn’t been able to find any fog grass. Based on what the housekeeper said, there was no fog grass available on the market at all. If they wanted to buy some, they would have to send someone to buy it from the Four Great Empires.

After all, fog grass was cultivated from the great plains to the far east. Some

of the market centers of the Four Great Empires fairly close to the great plains did have a small amount of fog grass for sale.

“Right now, of the eight ingredients I need to produce Bloodrupture poison, seven are ready. All I’m missing is cloud fungus.” Within his secret study, Linley had put all of the various herbs in front of him on a table, pondering what to do. Of the eight ingredients, there were three that were rare. Fog grass had been procured by the Dawson Conglomerate, while he already had enough Blueheart Grass.

“If I wait three months, then at that time, the people from the Dawson Conglomerate will come and deliver the cloud fungus.” Linley felt very confident.

At most, three months. At that time, he would have all the ingredients that he needed, and would thus be able to prepare a few mixtures of Bloodrupture poison.

But Linley wasn’t the sort of person to sit around waiting.

“Help me spread the word. Let it be known that I am preparing to begin a period of training with the usage of herbal baths, and need cloud fungus as one of my components. I’m willing to pay up to a million gold coins for it,” Linley instructed his housekeeper.

Although Linley wouldn’t lie to his bros, he had to give a good excuse to the rest of the world.

Cloud fungus, in and of itself, was not a poisonous plant. It actually was greatly beneficial to the body. But all herbs possessed their own wondrous properties. When these eight herbs were all refined and processed together, they would be able to produce a poisonous powder like the Bloodrupture poison.

“Yes, Lord Linley.” Upon hearing the words, ‘a million gold coins’, the housekeeper’s heart trembled.

To Linley, a million gold coins really wasn’t much. When he had auctioned off his sculpture, ‘Awakening From the Dream’, the price was twelve million gold coins. Afterwards, when Patterson had secretly met with him, he had gifted

Linley another ten million gold coins. After Linley's rise to prominence and appointment to the rank of Prime Court Magus, the Radiant Church, King Clayde, and many other nobles had all given Linley many valuable gifts.

And just a short while ago, the Debs clan had gifted Linley with a magicrystal card that had one million gold coins on it.

Linley's current net worth was well over 20 million gold coins.

And this wasn't even counting the Saint-level magicite core that Linley had acquired from the Saint-level Violet Tattooed Bear. That core, which Linley was keeping hidden, was a priceless treasure which probably was worth more than even a hundred million gold coins.

The news that Linley was seeking to buy cloud fungus for a million gold coins originally only spread amongst herbal merchants, but shortly afterwards, all the various nobles of the Kingdom of Fenlai learned of it as well. All of those nobles now knew that Master Linley needed cloud fungus.

If they could provide Linley with the cloud fungus, not only would they receive a million gold coins, they would also have a chance to build up a relationship with Linley.

Many nobles began to wrack their brains for methods by which they could locate cloud fungus.

But alas, cloud fungus was far too rare, and far too expensive.

After ordering this news to be spread out, Linley continued his life of solitary, pitiless training within his manor. In the blink of an eye, November arrived, and with it the temperature began to drop as well. The leaves of the trees within the Hot Springs Garden began to turn yellow and fall, filling the grass with fallow leaves.

"Haaaaa!"

Linley, who had been engaging in one-finger vertical push-ups suddenly exerted strength through his fingers, flipping himself into the air. Somersaulting easily through the air, Linley landed on the ground, his bare upper chest covered in sweat.



Aided by the Supergravity Field, after having trained for so long, even Linley's powerful body was beginning to feel tired.

"Whew."

Standing normally again, Linley felt the muscles in and near his fingers, arms, and shoulders all feel numb and sore. He found this feeling to be very comfortable, as he knew that in this situation, his muscles and bones were slowly strengthening.

The way to train one's body was to exceed one's limits time and time again, so long as one didn't exceed the limits by too much each time.

Seating himself cross-legged, Linley immediately began to train in accordance with the 'Secret Dragonblood Manual', allowing the liquefied Dragonblood battle-qi in his dantian to begin to rush out. In a short while, the mighty Dragonblood battle-qi had filled Linley's entire body.

Training, time and time again. Each time, the Dragonblood battle-qi would become a bit more pure, and Linley's bones and flesh would become a bit stronger.

The azurish-black Dragonblood battle-qi entered his dantian again, then spread out again. The dantian was the nucleus for a Dragonblood Warrior. Linley had reached the late-stage of the sixth rank long ago, and in September and October, he had reached the peak of the sixth rank.

Right now, Linley had reached a plateau. He could break through any day now.

"Crack. Crack." All sorts of strange sounds began to emit from Linley's body. Linley's muscles seemed to have a mouse buried beneath them, as they began to ripple up and down nonstop. Even his veins were popping out, and throughout Linley's body, beads of sweat and beads of blood were beginning to come out!

"I'm finally about to break through." Linley was shocked and pleased.

He had waited far too long for this day.

"Bubble, bubble."

That azurish-black Dragonblood battle-qi began to roil about strangely, filling Linley's entire body with pain. But within his dantian, that liquefied Dragonblood battle-qi began to condense itself yet again, increasing in density by several factors. The Dragonblood battle-qi was being drawn back into the dantian nonstop. And then, it would once again be emitted from the dantian yet again, forming a circle.

Whenever the Dragonblood battle-qi entered the dantian, it would transform.

After roughly an hour's time had passed, all of the Dragonblood battle-qi in Linley's body had undergone this transformation. Although there was theoretically only a thin barrier between the peak of the sixth rank and the early seventh rank, Linley's strength was now several times greater than it had been in the past.

Linley opened his eyes, a look of uncontrollable excitement within them.

"Haha, I've finally entered the realm of a warrior of the seventh rank." Linley was extremely excited.

As long as he were to agitate the Dragonblood battle-qi in his body, he would be able to assume the Dragonform. The training speed of the Dragonblood Warriors was extremely high, especially in the earlier stages. Linley had spent just about half a year before advancing from the sixth rank to the seventh rank. This sort of advancement was extremely astounding.

But Linley estimated that to progress from the seventh rank to the eighth rank, he would need several years, most likely.

The farther along one was, the harder the road would become. But nonetheless, most Dragonblood Warriors only needed a few decades to reach the Saint level in power.

Bebe, who had been sleeping nearby this entire time, opened his sleepy eyes, which suddenly brightened. Excitedly, he spiritually said to Linley, "Boss, you reached the seventh rank?"

"Yeah." Linley nodded happily.

"Then doesn't that mean, once you Dragonform, you have the power of an early-stage ninth rank?" Bebe was excited. "Looks like your power is gonna be

more than mine now, Boss!”

Linley began to laugh as well.

In the early stages, the boost to power provided by the Dragonform was quite dramatic. For example, as a warrior of the seventh rank, in the Yulan continent, he could only be considered an unremarkable fellow. But upon using the Dragonform, he would be an early-stage ninth rank warrior, who was qualified to be considered a notable figure in the world.

However, the more powerful one grew, the weaker the boost provided by the Dragonform would be.

Dragonform, after all, was nothing more than forcibly drawing out the Dragonblood that a weak Dragonblood Warrior hadn't been able to fully absorb.

“Early-stage ninth rank, and your Dragonform was influenced by the Armored Razorback Wyrms. The Armored Razorback Wyrms specializes in speed and defense, while you also possess strong defense and unquestionably high speed.” Doehring Cowart appeared from the ring at this time.

Linley was very confident in his own speed.

Because after taking on the Dragonform, not only did he have the natural high speed of a Dragonblood Warrior, he could also utilize wind magic and boost himself with a Supersonic spell of the seventh rank, which would increase his speed by a good amount.

Linley was so pleased that he just stood there, grinning stupidly.

“Boss, stop laughing like an idiot. Look at yourself, you're filthy. Take a bath, jeeze.” Bebe intentionally put a disgusted look on his face while covering his nose and jumping up and down as he bared his fangs at Linley.

Linley looked at himself.

At this moment, his body was covered in both sweat and blood. He really did look dirty.

“Splash!”

Linley jumped directly into the hot springs pool. The water in the hot springs

was constantly flowing, so Linley didn't worry about getting it dirty. After having experienced the sensation of his entire body transforming, then having the hot springs water rush against it, Linley felt so comfortable that he lay within the hot springs pool, eyes closed.

He fell asleep.

He felt so comfortable that he actually fell asleep.

Just as Linley was enjoying a beautiful dream, a voice rang out from outside. "Lord Linley. Lord Linley." The female attendant's voice clearly sounded rather anxious.

Linley's eyes suddenly opened. Hearing the voice, he couldn't help but frown. "Come in."

Only then did that female attendant dare to enter the gardens. Standing at the side of the hot springs pool, she snuck a few looks at Linley's naked body, then respectfully said, "Lord Linley, a herald from the palace is waiting outside. He says that he has come at the command of his Majesty, who is inviting you, Lord Linley, to make a trip to the palace."

"By command of his Majesty?" Linley hesitated slightly, then directly clambered out of the pool.

"You can leave now." Linley always dressed himself, as he didn't like the female attendants helping him dress.

"Yes." Her cheeks scarlet red, the female attendant quickly lowered her head and fled the Hot Springs Garden.



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Seated in a carriage, headed for the palace. Outside the carriage, aside from sixteen palace soldiers, there were sixteen knights from the Radiant Church. Linley's entourage was larger than that of even the Left Premier or the Right Premier.

"Lord Linley, his Majesty is currently within the East Flower Garden," the shrill

voice of the palace attendant rang out.

“Lead the way,” Linley said abruptly.

The palace attendant was very deferential towards Linley, smiling at him the entire way.

“Who else has his Majesty invited this time?” Linley asked.

“Just you, Lord Linley,” the palace attendant replied.

“Just me?” Linley began to feel suspicious, but he didn’t ask anything further. Under the guidance of the palace attendant, Linley finally arrived at the palace’s East Flower Garden. As it was now already November, there were very few flowers which were still in bloom. But the countless flowers in the East Flower Garden of the palace were still vibrant and beautiful.

And that ‘Golden Lion’, King Clayde, was currently chatting with his Queen in the garden.

“Haha, Linley, you came.” Clayde greeted Linley in a very friendly manner. “Come, sit.”

“Your Majesty. Queen.” Linley paid his respects, then sat down.

Clayde and the Queen exchanged glances, and then he grinned at Linley. “Linley, I heard that you have been looking for cloud fungus in order to create a medicinal bath for yourself?”

“Yes.” Linley nodded.

Suddenly, Linley had an idea as to why Clayde had specially requested his presence at the palace. But Linley didn’t quite dare to believe it. He was searching for this cloud fungus for the sake of dealing with Clayde. Could it be that Clayde was going to...

“Haha, I knew you were searching for this cloud fungus, so I sent my men out to do a search. By a stroke of good fortune, my palace storehouse just so happened to have a single clump of cloud fungus.” Clayde glanced at a nearby female attendant, who immediately presented a golden brocade box she was holding to Linley.

Linley was really, truly stunned.

The cloud fungus that he had been so desperately seeking, had been provided to him by King Clayde!

## Producing the Powder

Cloud fungus. The true reason why Linley was seeking cloud fungus was to use it to produce Bloodrupture poison powder. And the reason why he wanted to produce Bloodrupture poison was because he was going to use it on Clayde.

But in the end, it was Clayde who provided the cloud fungus to him.

“Can it be that hidden deep within the world, there really is such a thing as the cycle of karma?” Linley suddenly thought of the teachings of the Radiant Church, one part of which discussed fate. In the past, Linley had never believed in any religion, but this affair really had developed in a very bizarre way.

Given that the cloud fungus had just been delivered into his hands, how could he not take it?

“Thank you, your Majesty.” Linley smiled, bowing in thanks while accepting the cloud fungus.

But in his heart, Linley was laughing coldly. “Since you’ve given it to me, this means that the heavens themselves desire your death. You can’t blame me.”

Linley had virtually no memories of his mother, but that didn’t stop Linley from deeply desiring to have had a mother’s love. Due to never having known his mother, Linley had always been a bit lonely. Whenever he saw someone else’s mother and felt a bit unhappy, he would think silent, lonely thoughts of his mother.

Upon capturing Clayde, he definitely would be able to discover his mother’s whereabouts!

“Linley, I’ve invited the Right Premier for lunch today. Stay here and have lunch with us, why won’t you.” Clayde beamed at Linley.

“Yes, your Majesty.” Linley’s attitude was very humble.

The Queen nodded gracefully to Linley, then said to Clayde in a gentle voice,

“Your Majesty, you and Master Linley can remain here. I’ll go back now.” Clayde nodded calmly as well. In the Kingdom of Fenlai, the King’s authority vastly outstripped that of the Queen’s.

November. The temperature was getting cold.

But Linley and Clayde were both dressed lightly, not afraid of the cold in the slightest. Linley was now a warrior of the seventh rank, while Clayde was an even mightier warrior of the ninth rank.

“Your Majesty, why did you invite Merritt to dine with you?” Linley was chatting naturally and casually with Clayde.

Hearing Linley’s words, a very satisfied smile appeared on Clayde’s face. He glanced at the nearby palace maids, who very obediently left. Only then did Clayde say in a low voice, “Linley, are you aware that Merritt has recently married his thirteenth wife?”

“Thirteenth?” Linley was stunned.

He didn’t know that this apparently serious, solemn judge, the Lord Right Minister, was so fickle in love.

“His new wife is an extremely flavorful woman.” Clayde revealed a smile towards Linley, a type of smile all men understood.

Seeing that expression on Clayde’s face, Linley couldn’t help but be startled.

“Haha...” Clayde patted Linley on the shoulders. “Linley. Next year, you will be eighteen. Don’t tell me you’ve never tasted a woman before.”

Linley couldn’t help but feel awkward.

Clayde sighed, “Merritt, that kid, was actually able to acquire such an intoxicating little vixen. It really does make one jealous. But since I’ve taken a fancy to her, that intoxicating little vixen is mine. Merritt won’t even dare to touch her from now on.”

Clayde openly spoke of such affairs to Linley.

“Your Majesty? Is that... is that appropriate?” Linley was a bit surprised.

She was, after all, the wife of the Right Minister. But from the sound of it,



Clayde was going to directly seize her for himself.

“What’s inappropriate about it? Merritt only climbed to his current position through women to begin with. He should know very well what his place is. But Linley, that day when Merritt got married and had his banquet, I think you didn’t attend,” Clayde said questioningly.

During this period of time, Linley had been pondering the question of alchemy and herbal ingredients. He had no inclination to go to a wedding at all. Generally speaking, Linley declined all banquet invitations from nobles.

The wedding banquet of the Right Premier?

Declined all the same!

“Linley, how about today, during lunch, you take a look at Merritt’s new wife, Windsor. If you like her, I don’t mind giving her to you. I can guarantee that no matter how daring and audacious Merritt might be, he won’t dare to touch Windsor a single time,” Clayde said confidently.

Clayde possessed absolute authority within the Kingdom of Fenlai.

The day of Merritt’s wedding, Clayde had taken a fancy towards Windsor. That very night, Clayde had sent someone to bring Windsor to a manor outside, and he, Clayde, had thoroughly enjoyed himself.

As for Merritt, he didn’t dare to show any hint of temper.

What’s more, ever since that night, Merritt no longer dared to touch Windsor.

Some of the major ministers in the Kingdom of Fenlai had risen to their ranks through their abilities. Those were truly capable ministers indeed. But some ministers had clawed their way to their current ranks through some unsightly deeds.

Linley was secretly surprised at Clayde’s forcefulness.

But then again, Clayde, the one whom men named the ‘Golden Lion’, had always been as forceful as a lion. One could imagine how despotically he could act if he so chose.

“Your Majesty, Duke Merritt and the Duchess have arrived,” a palace attendant ran over and said respectfully.

“Haha, come, Linley.” Clayde immediately stood up.

Holding the packaged cloud fungus, Linley could only follow Clayde out. But shortly afterwards, they arrived at a very graceful, light-red courtyard within the palace.

Merritt and that Madame Windsor were there, waiting at the gate to the courtyard.

Linley couldn't help but glance at the Madame Windsor who had drawn Clayde's interest.

Madame Windsor's body was extremely slender. Although she was dressed very conservatively, her tight clothes accentuated every curve and every line of her slender body. Her waist was so slender, and yet her bosom was so full.

Her dark red hair was so alluring.

In particular, this Madame Windsor's eyes were soul-beguiling. Anyone who saw her would unconsciously begin to think improper thoughts.

“Your Majesty. Lord Linley,” Merritt said, and that Madame Windsor echoed him in her gentle voice.

“She really is quite an enchanting vixen,” Linley said to himself.

Clayde cast a delighted glance at Linley. In a low voice, he said to Linley, “What do you think? Do you feel a bit of an urge to...?”

“Your Majesty, let's go in and have lunch,” Linley said in a low voice.

“Haha...” Clayde began to laugh loudly.

That Windsor couldn't help but turn to stare at Linley with her beguiling eyes, seemingly quite interested in Linley. If Merritt and Clayde hadn't been there, perhaps she might have gone directly up to Linley and struck up a conversation with him.

“Wow, what a beautiful lady,” Bebe, on Linley's shoulders the entire time, said, his eyes growing round.

“Swish.”

Bebe actually leapt off of Linley's shoulders, landing directly... on Windsor's

bosom.

“It’s so big...” Bebe’s voice sounded out in Linley’s mind.

Linley was flabbergasted.

“What an adorable mouse!” Windsor excitedly cuddled Bebe, who used his little head to rub himself against her ampleness, seeming to enjoy himself very much.



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“Whew.”

Bebe in hand, Linley managed to finally leave the palace. This entire time in the palace, that Windsor kept on using her beguiling eyes to stare at him. Even Linley found it hard to endure.

They entered the carriage.

“Return.” Linley snapped an order to his guards, and the carriage immediately began to move. “Hey, Boss, what’s the rush? Right, didn’t that Clayde say he was willing to give Windsor to you? You should accept.” Bebe’s beady little eyes stared at Linley.

Linley couldn’t help but smack Bebe on his head. “You perverted little mouse.”

“Hrmph, I’m about to be of age, y’know,” Bebe said unhappily.

Linley didn’t know whether to laugh or to cry.

But thinking back to what he had gained from this trip to the palace, Linley couldn’t help but let a hint of a smile appear on his face. He took out the case by his side.

Within this case was a clump of cloud fungus.

“Now that I have the cloud fungus in hand, all eight ingredients are ready. I have what I need to produce the Bloodrupture poison powder.” Linley had already decided that he would immediately start to produce the powder when

he got back home.

“Boss, I feel like that Clayde is a rather brotherly, stand-up guy. Are you really going to kill him?” Bebe said in a low voice.

Frowning, Linley turned to look at Bebe.

“Bebe, Clayde is the ruler of a country. As long as he has any brains at all, he would naturally try to build a good relationship with me. He is friendly and does right by me, only because of my status and my potential. If I didn’t have potential, then Clayde probably wouldn’t even bother to notice me. Perhaps if I had a beautiful wife, he would directly take her for his own pleasure. Just like with that Merritt.”

Linley understood Clayde quite well.

A person like Clayde was actually quite heartless. But he could still be considered a capable ruler. At least, he was able to distinguish between capable ministers and useless ones.

“In fact, I even am beginning to wonder if, in the past, Clayde saw that my mother was beautiful and therefore wanted her for himself.” Upon seeing Windsor, Linley had thought of this possibility.

Based on Clayde’s personality, this was not impossible.

“Bebe, tell me, how can I spare Clayde?” Linley looked at Bebe. Just thinking about that possibility filled Linley with a boundless desire to kill.

Perhaps because he could feel the killing desire Linley was feeling towards Clayde, Bebe instantly said, “Kill him, kill him. I, Bebe, will be the first to act against him.” Bebe rose to his feet, waving his two paws around while baring his fangs, demonstrating to Linley the deep hatred he, too, felt for Clayde.

“No need for you to act. After finding out about my mother’s whereabouts, I will be the first to act,” Linley said coldly.

Within the secret room in Linley’s manor, under the light of eighteen lanterns, the entire room was bright. Linley was carefully following the procedures for producing Bloodrupture poison powder.

The procedure for producing this powder was extremely complicated. Each

step required caution, caution, caution.

If there was even the slightest error, then the ingredients would have been wasted.

Right now, on the table within the secret room, there were alchemist's tools, and the eight ingredients, all chopped up into many small pieces.

"Gurgle, gurgle."

Linley filtered the herbal juice out from the alchemist's pot, then placed this juice into a new, clean pot and began to boil it. At the same time, Linley began to carefully add the three remaining ingredients to the mixture.

"Can't get the order wrong. I should put in the Blueheart Grass, then the turmeric, then the cardamon kernels."

Staring at the alchemy pot, Linley focused all of his concentration onto it, carefully watching it for any reactions. Each step had to be controlled with extreme precision.

An entire night passed.

"I've finally produced a single liquid dose." Linley carefully strained the small amount of clear liquid out of the alchemist's pot, pouring it into a white tray.

"This translucent liquid seems to be just like clear water. There's no distinguishable difference at all." Linley sighed emotionally.

Based on the instructions for producing Bloodrupture poison powder, this final liquid dose could already be considered a form of Bloodrupture poison. However, only allowing it to dry into powder form would it reach its highest level of potency.

By now, this liquid dose had already been boiled once, and not much water remained within it. Most likely, within ten days' time, it would totally dry and transform into the Bloodrupture poison powder.

"The first dose was a success. Tomorrow, I'll make a second dose." Linley was very careful.

He didn't dare to use all the materials on a single attempt. After all, if he were to fail, it would be disastrous. By dividing the materials into multiple attempts,

at least a single failure wouldn't be too disastrous.

A single dosage of poison powder should be enough. But, to be cautious, Linley had decided to prepare multiple doses.

Year 9999 of the Yulan calendar. The end of November.

The six doses of Bloodrupture poison which Linley had produced had completely dried into powder form. Just by looking at its translucent, crystalline form, it was hard to imagine something which could so dramatically cripple the power of a warrior of the ninth rank.

"Whew. Although I've used up all my ingredients, these six doses of poison powder should be enough." Looking at the six packets of powder on his table, Linley let out a long breath.

For the sake of this Bloodrupture poison powder, Linley really had expended a great deal of time and effort. And now, he had succeeded.

"Now, the only thing that I am missing is an opportunity to make my move against Clayde." Linley couldn't help but begin to ponder a way to poison Clayde and capture him without anyone suspecting that it had been Linley who did it.

## The Scheme

This would be difficult!

If it was within the palace, Linley would have to first find an opportunity to use the poison, and then both question and kill Clayde within the confines of the palace.

“Even if I don’t worry about the issue of being discovered to be the murderer, upon killing Clayde, it will be very hard to escape the palace.” In Linley’s mind, one possibility after another appeared, then was discarded.

Linley finally reached a conclusion...

“To use poison within the palace and then escape afterwards is virtually impossible.” Linley discarded this possibility entirely. After all, there were simply too many experts in the palace. Only if he used the Dragonform would he be able to cut his way out.

But Linley was not willing to expose the secret that he could Dragonform.

“It has to be outside the palace.” Linley felt his head hurt.

A place outside the palace, where Clayde would be willing to be alone with him. And, the place had to be a standalone place. This was extremely difficult. Clayde was, after all, the king. If someone wanted to meet with him, they would go in person to the palace.

Linley couldn’t, after all, send someone to the palace and ask King Clayde to come meet him.

Linley had never heard of a situation where a subject would request a ruler to come see them. This clearly was unfeasible. Even if Clayde gave him face and agreed, Clayde would most likely be suspicious and on guard.

As soon as Clayde became on his guard, the chance of success would be lowered.

“I have to find an opportunity to be with him alone in a place outside the palace.” Despite having been in Fenlai City for so long, Linley had never been in a one-on-one situation with Clayde before.

Generally speaking, they would only meet at banquets.

But Linley couldn't make his move at a banquet, in front of an audience of countless people, could he?

“What to do?”

Linley was beginning to feel vexed.



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Early December. The temperature of Fenlai City suddenly dropped, and the first snow of this winter came as well. The entire Fenlai City was covered white, and the cold bite of the air caused many nobles to hide inside their homes, unwilling to venture outside.

Still dressed in loose robes, Linley was strolling on the snow-covered streets, escorted by two guards.

“Crunch. Crunch.” The sound of footsteps on the snow.

The snow-covered Fenlai City was exceptionally alluring. On the gates of the noble manors on each side of Greenleaf Road were countless icicles. The reflected rays of the sun glittered off of them, making them seem all the more beautiful to behold.

The towering, snow-covered pine trees in front of the manors seemed exceptionally beautiful as well.

The scene was a beautiful one.

But Linley's mood was foul.

“That Clayde is already a warrior of the ninth rank. Although advancing from the ninth rank to the Saint level is very hard, perhaps one day he will suddenly break through. By then, it will be even more hopeless.” Linley really didn't want to wait any longer.



The earlier he made his move against Clayde, the greater his chance of success.

But he needed an opportunity.

“Boss, look. Many of the nearby manors have been renovated and redecorated.” Bebe’s voice rang out in Linley’s mind.

While walking on the road, Linley’s thoughts were elsewhere, so naturally he hadn’t noticed. But upon hearing Bebe’s words, Linley noticed that the manors alongside Greenleaf Road were now different from before.

“This is...” Linley said questioningly.

“Hang it up. Good. Now move it a bit to the left.” A servant of the nearest manor was busy hanging up various decorations under the instruction of a nearby man.

“Those are... Yulan flowers!” Linley noticed the decorations hanging next to the door and what patterns they had. The patterns looked like Yulan flowers.

Suddenly, Linley understood what was going on.

“Right! It’s already December. The Yulan Festival will be coming quite soon. And it will be the 10000th Yulan Festival!” Linley knew the importance of this particular Yulan Festival.

Year 10000 of the Yulan calendar, January 1st. That would perhaps be the most festive day in the history of the Yulan continent. No wonder every single noble clan was putting up so many decorations.

“Crunch!”

One of the steps on a ladder which the servant was standing on while hanging up decorations suddenly broke. The servant lost his footing, wobbled, and then fell down, first banging against the ladder, and then slamming into the stone ground head-first, his fresh blood staining the ground red.

The nearby servants all were frightened.

“Are you okay?” All of them ran forward to help the man up.

“A bit... a bit dizzy...” That wounded man said in a weak voice. Fortunately, the

ladder wasn't too high, and so the force with which he struck the ground wasn't too great either. That was the only reason he had survived.

"Alright, that's enough for you for today. Go home and rest. Kohl, go take care of him. Jeeze, you weren't even that high up, but you managed to smash yourself this badly." The manager shook his head helplessly.

The servant named Kohl immediately helped prop up the wounded servant and began to assist him back to his home.

Seeing this, Linley was stunned.

"Lord... Lord Linley?" Only now did that manager notice Linley, and he quickly went forward to pay his respects to Linley. This manor was the manor of Duke Bonalt, and Linley had come here before. Naturally, this manager recognized Linley.

"Good morning, Lord Linley," the manager said with a bow.

Only now did Linley recover from his stupor. An excited smile appearing on his face, he looked at the man and chuckled. "Haha, good morning to you as well. Haha, alright, time to go home."

Excited, Linley immediately turned around, leading his guards back.

"Hey, why is our lord so happy?" Those two warriors began to chat with each other in low voices.

They had seen what a foul mood Linley had been in this morning, so what had suddenly caused him to be so excited?

"This method is so simple. Why didn't I think of it? Haha!" Linley couldn't help but slap himself on the head. He really had obsessed so much that his brain had gone bad.

Linley had already come up with a surefire method to bring Clayde to visit him. This method was... receive an injury!

"I'll pretend that when I was training battle-qi, I suffered some internal injuries by accident. If I'm wounded, from what I've seen thus far, Clayde will most likely come to visit me."

Linley was feeling unbelievably happy. As long as he made his move within his

own manor, it would be very easy for him to plot against Clayde.

“As for the status and wealth granted by the Holy Union, I’ve never cared too much. After I find out what happened to my mother and kill Clayde, I will use the backchannels of the Dawson Conglomerate to flee from the Holy Union’s domain.” Linley had already come to a firm decision.

The Holy Union held no attractions for Linley.

Right now, his one and only family member, little Wharton, was staying in the O’Brien Empire. There was nothing in the Holy Union preventing Linley from leaving.

To kill Clayde in a way which wouldn’t raise any suspicions was virtually impossible. Since this was impossible, the only choice Linley had was to accept that he would have to make a small sacrifice. To Linley, the Holy Union held no further attractions, after all.



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Linley’s manor. The Hot Springs Garden.

Linley was seated cross-legged within the grassy area, cultivating Dragonblood battle-qi. Like the ferocious waves of the ocean, the Dragonblood battle-qi burst forth, clashing against every blood vessel in his body.

In truth, the average warrior of the seventh rank wouldn’t be able to withstand such training. But Linley was different. He had drank blood from a living dragon. Generally speaking, when dragon’s blood was applied to the outside of one’s body, it would acquire an astonishing durability. But Linley had actually drank it into his stomach, which caused all of his blood vessels to also gain an incredible degree of resiliency.

“Paagh!”

Linley suddenly vomited out a mouthful of fresh blood, and his face turned white.

“Aaaaargh!” A painful, guttural roar ripped out from Linley’s mouth.

Right now, all of the female attendants outside the Hot Springs Garden could faintly hear that low roar of Linley's, and they all rushed against the door, pressing their ears against it to listen carefully.

"Lord Linley... seems to be in a lot of pain?" One of the skinnier attendants said questioningly.

"Seems like it." Another, chubbier attendant nodded.

But none of them dared to go inside.

"Lord Linley?" That skinnier attendant called out.

"Come... come in..." Linley's voice rang out.

Those two attendants exchanged glances, then immediately pushed the door open and ran inside. But upon arriving at the grassy area, they were both frightened. There was a large pool of blood on the ground, and Linley was collapsed on the ground, his face pale.

"Assist me to my room," Linley said in a low voice.

"Yes. Yes."

The two female attendants were a bit frantic. Each of them helping hold Linley by an arm, they immediately assisted Linley all the way to his private bedroom.

"Milord, should we ask for the light-style magi to come?" The skinnier female attendant asked.

"No need. My injuries are internal. Magic won't be able to help. I have to quietly recover." Linley took a deep breath, then assumed the meditation position on the bed, his eyes closing. "The two of you can leave now."

"Yes, milord." The two female attendants bowed respectfully and left.

Both the light-style and the water-style recovery spells were spells of a reparative nature, allowing physical wounds to heal. But to damage done to internal organs, they wouldn't be of much assistance.



Within Linley's room. Only him and Yale were present.

"Third Bro, you aren't injured?" Yale was confused. "If you aren't injured, why are you pretending to be injured? And asked to meet with me so urgently." Even before he feigned injury, Linley had sent someone to ask for Yale.

Linley said in a low voice, "Boss Yale, this affair has to do with my revenge. Boss Yale. I can tell you now. That Clayde is most likely the person who killed my mother."

"The person who killed your mother?" Yale stared. "Third Bro, you are planning to...?"

"Right. Get revenge." Linley didn't hide anything from his bro.

"That Clayde is a warrior of the ninth rank. How are you going to get revenge on him? And he's the king of the Kingdom of Fenlai as well." Yale was growing frantic with concern for Linley.

Linley said solemnly, "Don't worry. I already have total confidence in my ability to deal with him. However, after I kill Clayde, then even if the Radiant Church spares me and doesn't kill me, my life will most likely be made miserable. Thus I have decided that after I kill Clayde, I will immediately leave the Holy Union."

"Leave the Holy Union?" Yale was startled, but then he quickly understood. "Right. You do need to leave. Leave this to me. The mercantile power of our Dawson Conglomerate is spread over every major city in the Holy Union. It will be very easy for us to smuggle a person out of the Holy Union with no one the wiser."

"What's more, our Dawson Conglomerate has master disguisers as well." Yale was totally confident.

Linley knew full well how powerful the Dawson Conglomerate was. How could one of the three major trading unions of the Yulan continent be trifled with?

"I know. That's why, Boss Yale, I want for you to arrange for someone to wait for me at that hotel at the end of the Greenleaf Road. When I arrive there later,

you can help arrange for me to be smuggled outside the Holy Union.”

Linley was very confident that after killing Clayde, he would be able to easily make his way to this hotel.

“No worries.” Yale nodded.

“Third Bro.” Yale frowned, looking at Linley. “You have to be careful.”

Linley smiled at Yale. “Boss Yale, you must have faith in me.”

The news that Linley had been injured quickly spread out. The first to receive this news was not the ruler of the Kingdom of Fenlai; it was the Cardinal of the Radiant Church, Guillermo.

But very quickly, King Clayde and the various nobles of Fenlai received the news that Linley had suffered an injury when training. Although injuries caused by training were rather rare, they weren’t unheard of. Generally speaking, only someone who trained too hard and exceeded his body’s maximum limits would suffer such an injury, and sometimes even harm the organs. “The only thing to do now is to wait for King Clayde.” Wearing a loose robe, Linley sat on a chair in his bedroom, his face ashen.

Bebe was standing on a nearby chair as well.

“Lord Linley.” The female attendant from outside ran in.

Linley’s eyes couldn’t help but light up. But then, Linley immediately returned to presenting himself as ‘weak’. Looking at the attendant, he said calmly, “What is it.”

“Lord Cardinal Guillermo has arrived,” the female attendant hurriedly said.

“Oh?” Linley’s heart was suddenly gripped with worry.

Although Guillermo’s visit had been expected, Linley suddenly thought of something... what if Guillermo was present when King Clayde arrived as well? Then it would be very difficult for him to act against Clayde.

After all, Guillermo was a magus of the ninth rank. That Bloodrupture poison was used primarily against warriors to weaken their power, and didn’t have much of an impact on magi.

“Linley!” Just at this moment, Guillermo’s voice sounded out from outside the room.

## The Wine

Linley couldn't help but turn his head to the door.

Guillermo was there, dressed in a long, red robe, a smile on his face, his waist straight. His eyes, however, were very fierce and resolved. Under the escort of the two Vicars, Guillermo strode into the room.

"So Guillermo has already arrived. I hope Clayde will be a bit slower." Linley was filled with anticipation.

The only weakness in this plan of his was the possibility that Clayde and this magus of the ninth rank would come at the same time. After all, the Bloodrupture poison was of no use against a magus.

Linley immediately began to stand up. "Lord Guillermo."

"Linley, look at yourself. Your face is so pale. Sit, sit." Guillermo immediately took two quick steps forward to stop Linley from rising.

"Lord Guillermo, I'm fine. Although I suffered some internal injuries while training battle-qi, I can still walk and act normally. Only, it's a pity that for a period of time, I won't be able to train battle-qi anymore," Linley said with a long sigh.

"At a time like this, you are still thinking of training battle-qi?" Guillermo said angrily. "External injuries are easy to heal, but internal ones are much more dangerous. If you don't heal them properly, it's possible that they'll cause harm to you for your entire life."

"Thank you, Lord Guillermo, for your concern."

In truth, Linley had a very good impression of Guillermo. He couldn't help but cast a glance to the entranceway. "I hope this Clayde will arrive a bit later."

Yesterday's blizzard had caused Fenlai City to become very cold, and there were very few people on the road from the palace. But right now, a hundred-



man strong contingent of guards were currently protecting and escorting a lavish golden carriage out of the palace.

“Crunch. Crunch.”

The wheels of the carriage crushed through the snow.

“Ransome, open the door,” Clayde ordered.

The carriage was extremely spacious, and could easily fit five or six people very comfortably. This Ransome was one of Clayde’s personal bodyguards, and he immediately said, “Yes, your Majesty.” He quickly pulled open the curtain-door, letting in a blast of that frigid air.

But neither Ransome nor Clayde felt the cold in the slightest, despite the fact that Clayde was just wearing a jacket over some undergarments, while Ransome was wearing the traditional uniform of a palace servant.

“This Linley actually managed to damage his vitals due to over-training battle-qi. Jeeze.” Clayde couldn’t help but laugh while sighing.

Ransome said in a low voice, “That Lord Linley is still very young, yet he still has such accomplishments. No matter how talented a person is, one still needs to train hard. For a warrior to be able to injure himself internally due to over-training battle-qi shows to what extent he goes to when he trains.”

The limits to a person’s body’s endurance might perhaps be very high.

But each time one tried to stimulate one’s potential, one couldn’t go too far. Although it was true that hard work was beneficial to a warrior in training, one couldn’t go overboard either. The body wouldn’t be able to handle it.

“Right. This Linley’s future accomplishments will be unimaginable.” Clayde nodded as well.

Seeing the look on Clayde’s face, Ransome sighed secretly.

As Clayde’s personal bodyguard, naturally he had a deep understanding of his master. With the forceful personality that Clayde had, it was very rare for Clayde to be so courteous to someone. But towards Linley, Clayde had never stopped being courteous for a single moment.

“It’s a pity that, in that year, his Majesty... alas. His Majesty knows that he has

no hope of entering the Saint level, which is why he views Linley with such importance.” Ransome knew Clayde’s secret.

Although Clayde was a warrior of the ninth rank, Ransome knew... that unless the Radiant Sovereign was to bestow his divine power upon Clayde, Clayde would never be able to reach the Saint-rank, no matter what.

“Your Majesty, we have arrived at Lord Linley’s manor,” Ransome said softly.

Through the open door, the gate to Linley’s manor could be seen quite clearly. At this moment, there were two powerfully built warriors standing guard outside the gate. These two warriors were elite members of ace divisions of the Knights of the Radiant Church.

“Crunch.” The carriage came to a halt.

Ransome was the first to leave the carriage, then respectfully waited for Clayde to step out as well.

“Your Majesty!” Those two guards bowed respectfully.

“Oh, someone arrived before me?” Clayde noticed that there was another luxurious carriage stationed outside, along with a group of Knights of the Radiant Temple standing outside.

“Right. Lord Guillermo has already arrived,” one of the two warriors guarding the gate said respectfully.

“Lord Guillermo has arrived? That’s fine.” Clayde glanced back at his own squad. “All of you stay here. Ransome, come with me.” After issuing these orders, Clayde made his way through the gate, his personal bodyguard behind him.



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Right now, Linley was still engaged in conversation with Guillermo. Neither of them knew that Clayde had already reached the gate.

“This Guillermo still isn’t leaving?” Linley was beginning to grow impatient.

If Guillermo intended to keep on chatting with him like this, who knew how

much longer this would go on for? The longer this went on, the more complicated things would get. Growing anxious, Linley suddenly put a hand to his mouth.

“Cough. Cough!” Linley let out a few coughs, coughing so hard that his white face turned red.

“Linley.” Guillermo was very surprised.

He didn’t imagine that Linley’s injury would be as severe as this.

“Linley, you must properly use this medicine I have brought you. They have the effect of assisting the body in healing its internal organs,” Guillermo hurriedly said. “Your body isn’t in good shape right now. Get some rest. I won’t disturb your rest any further.” Guillermo stood up.

After coughing, Linley’s ashen face was even paler than before, without a hint of blood.

“Lord Guillermo, my sincere apologies,” Linley said apologetically.

“It’s fine. Get some rest. Your body is what’s important.” Guillermo reminded him yet again, before leaving the room along with his Vicars.

Just as Clayde and Ransome walked through the gate to Linley’s manor, they heard a voice call out from behind them.

“Your Majesty. Your Majesty.”

Clayde turned around questioningly, only to see Merritt quickly jump out from a carriage. “Your Majesty.”

“Merritt, you came as well?” Clayde chuckled, coming to a stop as he looked at Merrit.

Merritt ran to Clayde. Respectfully, he said, “Lord Linley’s been injured. How could I not come? Your Majesty, how could you go inside with just Ransome? It isn’t safe!” Merritt hurriedly said.

When a ruler paid a visit to one of his subject’s, usually he would bring all of his guards directly inside as well.

The first reason was to protect the safety of the ruler. The second was to

display the ruler's authority and power.

"No need. I'm just checking up on Linley. No need to raise the flag high and all that." Clayde chuckled. "Much less, within the City of Fenlai, who is capable of posing a threat to me, hrm?"

Clayde's self-confidence wasn't without merit.

First of all, Clayde wasn't worried about most combatants of the ninth rank. The only type of person which Clayde truly feared was a Saint-level combatant, but would a Saint-level combatant come to assassinate him, a king? What's more, this was Fenlai City, the Holy Capital of the Radiant Church!

Who would dare to act rashly within the confines of the Radiant Church's headquarters?

"Right, right. Your servant was being too cautious," Merritt hurriedly said.

"Let's go. We can go inside together." Clayde entered along with Merritt and Ransome.

"Your Majesty, Linley is currently recuperating within the private courtyard in the east wing. Allow me to guide the way." Escorted by the pretty attendant, Clayde, Merritt, and Ransome began to head towards Linley's resting area. But halfway there...

Clayde and the other two saw Guillermo and his two Vicars.

"Lord Guillermo." Clayde, Merritt, and Ransome simultaneously paid their respects.

"Clayde, you came as well." Guillermo nodded. "This internal injury of Linley's seems to be a heavy one. Just now, he was coughing. When you go to see him, don't waste too much time. Just see how he is doing, then allow him to rest."

"Understood." Clayde nodded.

"Then I'll leave now." Guillermo nodded as well, then led his two Vicars out and left.

Clayde went with Merritt and Ransome to Linley's chambers.

Guillermo's departure allowed Linley to let out a sigh of relief. But before he

had a chance to take a breather, a female attendant came running in to make a report.

“Lord Linley. His Majesty and the Right Premier have arrived,” the female attendant hurriedly reported.

“He’s here?”

Linley’s eyes lit up.

“I’ve waited so long. He finally came.” Linley couldn’t repress the excitement in his heart. “You can go now.” Linley immediately ordered the attendant to leave, and then he calmly stood up, quietly awaiting Clayde’s arrival.

Just a few seconds later, Linley heard the sound of footsteps.

“Linley.” Clayde’s voice rang out as soon as he entered the room. In three quick steps, he arrived by Linley’s side. In a very caring voice, he said, “Linley, your face looks terrible. Quick, sit down and rest. Have a good rest.”

Linley was pressed down to his seat by Clayde.

“Lord Linley.” Merritt was very courteous to Linley as well.

“Thank you, your Majesty. Thank you, Lord Merritt,” Linley said with a rather weak voice.

But the excitement in Linley’s heart was beginning to swell. In the past, after learning of his father’s death, Linley had instructed Hillman to take his clan’s heirloom, the warblade ‘Slaughterer’, to the O’Brien Empire. At that time, he had already made up his mind that the risk of death would not be enough to sway his decision to gain revenge.

Father. Mother!

His father’s death was linked to Clayde as well. If it hadn’t been for Clayde ordering Patterson to abduct his mother, how would his father have died in an attempt to gain revenge? And of course, his mother’s disappearance was Clayde’s doing.

“Your Majesty. I’m fine. I’ve just suffered some internal injuries, and won’t be able to train battle-qi for a while. I can still carry out my normal, day-to-day activities,” Linley said with a smile.

“That’s good. That’s good.” Clayde revealed a hint of a smile as well.

“Lord Merritt, you came as well,” Linley suddenly ‘remembered’ something, and exclaimed happily, “Right! I haven’t had the chance to drink the flagon of fine wine that you gifted to me last time, Lord Merritt. Since both you and his Majesty have arrived today, let’s have a little drink.”

As he spoke, Linley headed to the liquor cabinet next to him.

“No need. Linley, you’ve been injured. You can’t drink any alcohol.” Clayde advised him.

“It’s fine. My wound is just a light one. And a little bit of wine is good to get one’s veins active.” As he spoke, Linley plucked out four wineglasses, along with a bottle of red wine. “Ransome, you should sit as well. At my home, there’s no need to stand on so much ceremony.”

Linley knew a great deal about Ransome.

As Clayde’s personal bodyguard, he was an extremely powerful person as well. Although Linley couldn’t clearly determine his power, Linley was certain that he was at least a combatant of the seventh rank, or perhaps even of the eighth rank.

“No need. I don’t drink alcohol.” Ransome shook his head in refusal.

As his Majesty’s personal attendant, he had to maintain his wakefulness at all times.

“Linley, Ransome never drinks alcohol. No need to invite him to drink.” Clayde shook his head towards Linley. “Linley, when Lord Guillermo saw me just now, he said you were coughing hard. He wanted you to have a good rest. It’s best that we don’t drink.”

Not drink?

Nobody but Linley knew this, but the Bloodrupture poison had already been mixed in with this wine. If Clayde didn’t drink, how would he be poisoned?

“No worries. Lord Guillermo is overly concerned about my welfare.” Smiling, Linley poured everyone a glass of wine. “Your Majesty. This wine is exceptionally delightful. Lord Merritt, come. Let’s all have a toast.” Linley raised

his own glass.

Clayde and Merritt had no choice but to raise their glasses as well.

A light ringing sound as their cups touched. And then Clayde, Merritt, and Linley each drank the wine.

“Paaah!”

Linley suddenly began to cough violently again, spitting out all the wine from his mouth. The coughing Linley’s face turned a sickly red color again.

“Linley, I told you not to drink wine. You just had to drink,” Clayde said in dissatisfaction. He hurriedly went over to help Linley.

“I’m fine.” Linley smiled and reached out to stop Clayde.

Suddenly. Linley stared at Clayde. In a solemn voice, he said, “Your Majesty. There is a very important matter which I would like to discuss with you, your Majesty.”

“A very important matter?” Seeing the expression on Linley’s face, Clayde felt confused.

## Mother's Life or Death

Linley cautiously glanced about the room, saying in a low voice, "Your Majesty, just a moment. Let me order out the people who are outside." As he spoke, Linley walked out the door, then barked at the two guards outside. "Both of you, stand down. Without my direct orders, do not permit anyone to enter this courtyard."

"Yes, Lord Linley."

Those two guards saluted respectfully, then left. Now, the only ones left in this standalone courtyard were Linley, Clayde, Merritt, and Ransome.

"Creaaak." Linley quietly shut the door.

"Linley, what sort of secret is this, that you even close the door?" Clayde chuckled.

Linley glanced at Clayde, laughing coldly in his heart. He himself knew that Clayde had already been poisoned by the Bloodrupture poison. As the Bloodrupture poison didn't actually cause any damage to the body, just prevent the generation of battle-qi, it was only after a person attempted to generate battle-qi that they would discover that they had been poisoned.

"This affair really is quite important." Linley's face was solemn.

At this time, Ransome subtly moved closer towards Clayde. As the personal bodyguard of the king, Ransome was beginning to feel that this environment was vaguely dangerous. At the same time, Ransome also felt that as Clayde was a warrior of the ninth rank, and he Ransome was a warrior of the eighth rank, by all rights, nobody here should be capable of being a threat to them.

But one could never be too careful.

"Your Majesty." Linley stared solemnly at Clayde. "My mother left this world when I was young."



Clayde nodded. He had investigated Linley's background, and had discovered that Linley's mother had died in childbirth, while giving birth to Linley's younger brother, Wharton.

"I have no memories of receiving motherly love, only of the strictness of my father. My father was quite severe towards me in terms of both warrior training as well as all the education which nobles were expected to have. My father's requirements for me were very high and very strict."

Linley looked at Clayde as he spoke slowly.

Clayde was beginning to be confused. He didn't understand what any of this had to do with the so-called 'important matter' which Linley had mentioned. But as the ruler of the kingdom, Clayde showed a kingly poise and didn't interrupt.

"Your Majesty, I expect that you know that my clan, the Baruch clan, is also the clan of the Dragonblood Warriors." A slightly proud look was on Linley's face.

"That's right. One of the Four Supreme Warrior clans, the Dragonblood Warrior clan. This is an illustrious, ancient lineage." Clayde sighed with praise.

Linley shook his head. "We were only illustrious in the past. My clan had fallen so far that even our ancestral heirloom had been lost for hundreds of years. Each and every generation of Baruch clan leaders had desired to seize back this heirloom for centuries, but this never occurred. Your Majesty, when I was accepted by the Ernst Institute and left home, do you know what my father said to me the day I left?"

"What did he say?" Clayde looked at Linley.

"My father said, if in the future I do not bring back the ancestral heirloom of our clan, even in his death, he wouldn't forgive me!" Linley's body was trembling slightly.

Clayde, Merritt, and even Ransome all stared in amazement. A father could actually say such a thing to his son? "Your father went a bit too far," Clayde said.

"No."

Linley shook his head solemnly. “I understand my father’s desire. My Dragonblood Warrior clan had been downtrodden for centuries, without a single truly powerful person appearing in all that time. My father understood that I would be the strongest person my clan had produced in centuries. Hundreds of years of hopes and desires all rested on my shoulders. Tell me, how could my father permit me to be a failure?” Clayde began to understand.

“My father’s lifelong desire was to bring the warblade ‘Slaughterer’ back to the clan.” Linley’s voice was growing fierce. “At the Ernst Institute, I didn’t dare to slacken off in the slightest. I trained like mad. I always remembered my father’s wish, my father’s instructions!”

Clayde and the others were beginning to understand Linley’s motivations.

“Half a year ago, after I auctioned off ‘Awakening From the Dream’, I went back home, and that time, I brought the warblade ‘Slaughterer’ with me.” Linley’s voice rose to a higher timbre.

Clayde, Ransome, and Merritt were stunned.

Because they all knew that on that trip, Linley had found that his father had already passed away.

“But when I excitedly returned home, I was welcomed by the news of my father’s death. Before he died, he didn’t have a chance to see the warblade, and I didn’t have a chance to see my father one last time either. All those years of hard work, my dream of making my father happy... unfortunately...” All the muscles on Linley’s face were twitching, and the expression on his face was terrifying to behold.

Clayde and the others could all understand how Linley was feeling.

“Linley, don’t be too heartbroken,” Clayde sighed.

Linley sneered. “But, do you know why or how my father died?”

Clayde, Merritt, and Ransome were all startled.

“My father was killed, your Majesty, by your younger brother, Duke Patterson!!!!” Linley’s eyes began to turn red.

“What?!” Clayde rose to his feet in shock. By his side, Merritt and Ransome

were both stunned as well.

“Therefore... I killed Patterson!” Linley’s voice was very sinister.

At this point in time, Ransome was the first to feel that something was very wrong in this room. He vigilantly inched closer to Clayde, guarding against Linley’s actions. But suddenly, just at this moment, Ransome felt a gust of wind from behind. Ransome, a warrior of the eighth rank, knew that he wouldn’t have time to turn his head, and so his only choice was to swing his arm behind him in defense.

“Crunch!”

An incredibly painful feeling... and then, Ransome could no longer feel his arm’s existence. Only now did Ransome notice, from the corner of his eyes...

A rat-like magical beast, nearly half a meter long, was standing beside him. Aside from noticing the rat’s blood-covered maw, Ransome also noticed its sharp claws moving extremely fast towards him. At such a close distance, Ransome didn’t have any chance of dodging at all.

It was too fast!

“Snick.”

The sharp claws split apart Ransome’s throat. Ransome stared in astonishment, but gradually, the life faded away from his eyes.

He simply couldn’t understand where this half-meter-long rodent-type magical beast had come from. The first thing he had done when he had entered the room was to scan it carefully. He only noticed a small Shadowmouse on the ground which was the size of a man’s palm.

Could a palm-sized Shadowmouse pose a threat?

To a warrior of the eighth rank, not at all. Ransome thus wasn’t on his guard against it at all.

And thus, being caught totally off-guard, this warrior of the eighth rank, Ransome, was easily killed by the Shadowmouse, Bebe. In truth, his death wasn’t too unjust. Given Bebe’s current power, even if Ransome had been able to fight him openly and fairly, he still probably wouldn’t have been able to hold

on for too long.

“Ransome.” Clayde and Merritt were both shocked.

A stately warrior of the eighth rank died in one action. The two of them stared in shock at that Shadowmouse. Before their very eyes, Bebe’s body shrank down, returning to a fist-sized state, then leaping back onto Linley’s shoulders.

“Bebe. Well done.” Linley rubbed Bebe’s little head.

Bebe closed his eyes, luxuriating in the feeling.

Linley turned his head to once more stare at Clayde. That cold look in his eyes made Clayde feel very uneasy.

“Linley, what do you think you are doing?” Clayde barked coldly. At the same time, he began to activate the battle-qi in his body. But at that moment, Clayde suddenly felt that those wide open blood vessels in his body had suddenly been stopped up by something.

Based on the dense battle-qi that Clayde possessed as a warrior of the ninth rank, in the past, the flow of his battle-qi was as powerful and forceful as the crushing waves of the sea. But now, he was only able to forcibly activate a tiny amount of battle-qi, and sometimes the flow would break entirely. Right now, the amount of battle-qi available to Clayde was perhaps only one percent of what was normally available to him.

“Your Majesty, don’t shout and don’t resist. If you resist, you die,” Linley said calmly.

Clayde instantly realized what sort of situation he was now in.

Right now, just based on his muscle power, he could perhaps compete against a warrior of the seventh rank. But that little Shadowmouse on Linley’s shoulders was capable of killing even a warrior of the eighth rank like Ransome in a flash.

Clayde didn’t doubt in the slightest that Linley and his little Shadowmouse had the power to kill him in an instant.

“Linley, how dare you! You dare to attempt to assassinate his Majesty?” Terrified out of his mind, Merritt shouted.

“Shut your mouth.” Linley cast a frozen glance at Merritt.

Merritt's muscle strength wasn't that powerful. Now that he was virtually unable to activate his battle-qi, he could perhaps be comparable at most to a normal warrior of the fourth rank.

Merritt quickly understood the situation as well. Not daring to shout at Linley, he still tried to persuade him. "Linley, you have a great future and lots of potential. In the future, you'll be a high-level official within the Radiant Church, and perhaps one day you'll even be the next Holy Emperor. Why must you destroy your future prospects? Linley, I trust that his Majesty won't blame you for having killed Patterson. He brought calamity upon himself when he acted against your father." As he spoke, Merritt glanced at Clayde.

Clayde nodded as well. "Linley, I am willing to pretend that nothing happened today. As for Patterson, he's already dead."

"Linley, his Majesty has already spoken. Don't act too rashly," Merritt hurriedly said.

"Shut your mouth!" Linley suddenly stretched his arm out.

Like iron claws, Linley's right hand stretched out and grabbed Merritt by the throat, suddenly raising him up in the air.

"Ah! Ah! Ah!" Merritt stared at Linley, terrified, gurgling out his pleas.

"Linley," Clayde immediately called out.

But with a cold laugh, Linley flexed his fingers, and then let his hand relax.

"Crunch!" With a snapping sound, Merritt fell to the floor. He grabbed his throat, just barely managing to force out an 'ah' 'ah' sound. In the moments just before his death, he still couldn't believe what had happened. He had come to visit today alongside King Clayde, and yet, this was the result.

As he died, Merritt's life began to flash before his eyes. The last thing he thought of... was a woman.

"If I had known that I would die in Linley's hands, then... that day... I shouldn't have let Alice slip through my fingers." This was the last thought Merritt ever had.

Linley was smiling coldly at Clayde.

“Linley, why are you acting against me? I seem to have treated you quite well.” Clayde looked at Linley, but at this moment, Clayde was hoping to himself: “Snow Lion, bring someone, quick, quick!” As a warrior of the ninth rank, Clayde had a magical beast companion of his own.

The Snow Lion was a Glacial Snow Lion, an eighth-ranked magical beast who came from the far north. Generally speaking, it would remain in the palace.

Because of the soul-binding contract which bound them, the minds of the Snow Lion and Clayde were linked. Thus, the Snow Lion immediately knew that Clayde had been a victim of an ambush. Clayde knew very well that right now... his priority was to delay, delay as long as he could!

“True, you have treated me well! But what about my mother?” Linley stared death at Clayde.

If it hadn't been for the fact that in the past, Clayde had ordered the abduction of Linley's mother, Linley's father would still be alive, and his mother would be at home as well. His parents would still be alive! But because of Clayde's actions, he had lost both parents.

“Mother? Didn't your mother die in childbirth?” Clayde didn't understand.

“Die in childbirth?” Linley laughed loudly, his voice wild. And then he stared coldly at Clayde. “That was just a cover story that we made up. Clayde, after my mother gave birth to my little brother, my father and her went to the Radiant Temple to pray. But that night, upon returning to their hotel, they were attacked and my mother was captured.”

“Clayde, could it be that you have forgotten that twelve years ago, you ordered Patterson to have kidnappers abduct my mother?” Linley stared coldly at Clayde. “Don't deny it. Patterson has already told me everything.”

“That... that was your mother?!” Clayde was totally shocked.

“What, you remember now?” Linley's eyes were boiling with fury. “Tell me. What happened to my mother? Tell me, is she alive, or is she dead?”

Clayde said calmly, “Your mother, I handed over to another person. You can't afford to offend that person. Neither can I.”

“Another person?” Linley totally didn’t understand.

But at the same time, Linley felt a thread of hope in his heart. A person that even Clayde couldn’t afford to offend had abducted his mother. There had to be an important reason behind it. Perhaps... his mother was still alive.

Clayde laughed coldly. “But I can tell you one thing. Your mother is dead. Without question, she is dead!”

“No...” Linley stared.

“You don’t believe me?” Despite the situation he was in, Clayde began to laugh.

## Kill However Many Come!

Within the palace.

The Glacial Snow Lion that Clayde had tamed had ten or so servants dedicated solely to his maintenance. After having tended him for so long, the Glacial Snow Lion's attendants could already guess what the Glacial Snow Lion was saying when it roared.

"Where's the Snow Lion?" A white-robed male palace attendant said in a high-pitched voice.

"Milord, the Snow Lion is currently asleep," one of the Glacial Snow Lion's attendants said respectfully.

"Mm." The palace attendant nodded arrogantly.

"Roar! Roar!" Suddenly, a series of ferocious roars could be heard. The roars sounded frantic and worried.

Hearing the sound, the face of the attendant responsible for tending the Glacial Snow Lion instantly changed. The white-robed palace attendant was even more worried. He asked, "What's going on? What's wrong with the Snow Lion?"

Roaring furiously, the Snow Lion quickly charged forwards to them.

"His Majesty, his Majesty is in danger!" The servant charged with tending the Snow Lion was frantic. "Quick! Ten years ago, this happened once as well. His Majesty must be in grave danger! Quick, quick, go protect his Majesty! Milord, where is his Majesty right now?"

The expression on the face of the white-robed palace attendant changed as well. "His Majesty, his Majesty left the palace. Right. He went to Lord Linley's manor."

"Quick, quick, go protect his Majesty!" The attendant bellowed.



At the same time, the attendant directly leapt onto the Snow Lion's back. After having spent every day feeding the Snow Lion, the creature held very little animosity towards him and was willing to let him ride atop itself. Just at this moment, five shadows suddenly flew over as well. These were five of the top experts of the palace.

"Snow Lion, is his Majesty in danger?" A golden-haired middle-aged man barked out to the Glacial Snow Lion.

The Snow Lion continued to bellow while nodding at the same time.

"Quick, to Lord Linley's manor. His Majesty is there," a jade-haired expert quickly said.

"Fourth Bro, you go find Lord Kaiser," the golden-haired middle-aged man shouted.

Lord Kaiser was the leader of these experts, and one of the most powerful combatants of the Kingdom of Fenlai. There were only a total of two combatants of the ninth level who had pledged loyalty to the Kingdom of Fenlai, with one being King Clayde himself, and the other being this Lord Kaiser.

Because of Lord Kaiser's high status, there was no need for him to live long-term in the palace.

"Yes, Second Bro! You go protect his Majesty. I'll find Lord Kaiser." The jade-haired man immediately sped off.

"Snow Lion, let's go."

The four of them immediately sped off with the Snow Lion in the direction of Linley's manor.

Within Linley's manor. Right now, within Linley's 'recuperation' courtyard, aside from two corpses, only Linley and Clayde were present.

"No... how do you know that my mother is dead? Didn't you say you gave my mother to another person, a person even you dared not offend? I don't believe that a person like that would abduct my mother just for the purpose of killing her." Linley refused to believe it.

His father was already dead. Linley didn't want for his mother to be dead as

well.

Deep in his heart, Linley thirsted for his family to be alive!

“Haha...” Clayde began to laugh while looking at Linley with pity in his eyes. “Linley, I can tell you clearly, right now, that person didn’t instruct me to abduct your mother for him. I did it on my own initiative, abducting your mother, then gifting her to him. Because I knew... he really needed women like her.”

“And I also know very well that in the past, this lord had acquired quite a few women like your mother. And all of them, without exception. Perished.” A hint of mad laughter was in Clayde’s eyes.

Linley seemed to have been hit by a bolt of lightning. His body swayed.

“Without exception?” Linley stared at Clayde.

Clayde looked at Linley with pity in his eyes. “Linley, you should’ve had an extremely resplendent future. But you insisted on choosing this path. Since you’ve already chosen this path, your future has now been determined as well.”

“Haha... hahahahahahaha!” Linley suddenly began to laugh loudly, all of the muscles on his face twitching.

Linley stared at Clayde with eyes like death. “Clayde. It was you. You were the one who harmed my mother, and in the end caused my father to die. If it wasn’t for you, I probably would be enjoying a wonderful life with my parents right now. It was you. It was all you. It was you who ruined—”

Linley’s hand stretched out, grabbing a straight chisel by his side.

“What are you planning to do?” Clayde stared at Linley with his tiger-like eyes.

“What am I going to do?” Linley stared at the straight chisel in his hands. “In the past, I always engaged in stone sculpting. But today... I want to try flesh sculpting.” Linley’s eyes had already begun to turn a dark, gold color, just like those eyes of the Armored Razorback Wyrms. Heartless. Cold!

Within the Coiling Dragon ring, Doehring Cowart continued to maintain his silence.

Having watched Linley grow up, Doehring Cowart understood Linley very well.

Linley deeply valued his family and his bros. For the sake of his family and his bros, Linley wouldn't fear death. Right now, the man responsible for the deaths of his mother and father were right in front of him. It was impossible for Linley to remain calm at a time like this.

"Flesh sculpting?" Clayde was startled. Linley's gaze was fierce, and he carefully inspected Clayde's entire body. "Don't worry. You have such a strong, powerful body. I am confident that I will be able to slice you a thousand times before I let you die, as a woman." Linley's voice was freezing cold, and the murderous aura rolled from him in waves.

"You!" Clayde's face turned icy cold as well, and he viciously snarled, "Linley, I will definitely kill you and let you reunite with your two unfortunate parents."

"Reunite?"

Thinking of his parents, Linley's urge to kill grew only stronger.

"Have a taste of my straight chisel technique." Linley's face appeared to be covered by a layer of frost. With a wave of his hand, he sent the straight chisel directly towards Clayde's waist. But once the straight chisel got within ten centimeters or so of Clayde, it was suddenly impeded by a strange force.

A translucent sigil suddenly appeared in mid-air, easily blocking Linley's chisel. "What is this?" Linley was totally shocked.

"I told you. I will definitely kill you." Clayde stood up, looking at Linley arrogantly. His powerful body made him look like an enraged lion.

"Impossible."

Linley's body erupted with Dragonblood battle-qi, and the straight chisel in his hands chopped viciously towards Clayde's body.

"Swish! Swish!" Seven chops in a row, all aimed at a different part of Clayde's body. But no matter where he chopped, his chisel would be blocked by that translucent pattern at around ten centimeters away from Clayde's body.

"You don't have the ability to kill me," Clayde said arrogantly.

"Raaaargh!" On Linley's shoulders, Bebe's mouth suddenly widened and expanded as he viciously bit down at Clayde. Facing Bebe's bite attack, Clayde

didn't seem afraid in the slightest. Perhaps he was simply too confident in the power of this defense, as he didn't even try to dodge.

When Bebe's fangs crunched down against that translucent defense, the translucent barrier suddenly glowed with the seven colors of the rainbow for a moment, and then the colors vanished.

"Hrm?"

The expression on Clayde's face changed. "What a powerful attack." Clayde didn't dare to let Bebe bite him again, and he quickly charged towards the outside.

"Boss, attack him, attack him! That defensive barrier on his body isn't innate to him. It must be some sort of magical spell from a scroll or something. There's got to be a limit to how much it can take! Your attacks will whittle away its energy, and once the energy is gone, he will definitely die!" Bebe frantically urged Linley.

Linley immediately understood this logic.

"You want to escape?!"

Linley's skin suddenly began to be covered by black scales, and those sharp spikes began to jut out from his elbows and kneecaps. A long, iron-whip-like tail sprouted from behind him, and on Linley's back, a row of spikes erupted from his spine.

Dragonform. Total Dragonform!

Even in his normal state, Linley was already a warrior of the seventh rank. After Dragonform, he was an early-stage warrior of the ninth rank.

"Swish!" Linley kicked off from the ground, and as he did, the marble beneath his feet cracked. Transforming into a blur, Linley charged directly at Clayde. Right now, Clayde was only able to rely on that comparatively pitifully small amount of muscle power to run, and thus couldn't move at high speed.

Linley's powerful, scale-covered right arm swept its claws ferociously at Clayde.

"Whap!" A terrifyingly powerful force smashed against Clayde's defensive

barrier. Although this barrier was able to protect Clayde, it would still be impacted by the momentum of the force. It was as though Clayde was inside an incredibly sturdy carriage. When others attacked the carriage, although Clayde wouldn't be harmed, the carriage would be sent flying in a certain direction. Naturally, Clayde would be sent flying as well.

This was exactly that sort of situation.

Clayde's body was sent flying forward, then smashed directly into a wooden screen. The wooden screen totally disintegrated from the power of this blow, but Clayde wasn't harmed at all. He rolled to his feet.

"Dragonblood Warrior. You actually can transform into a Dragonblood Warrior." Seeing Linley having truly Dragonformed, Clayde was totally stunned.

Before, Linley's strength wasn't that impressive. But after having taken on the Dragonform, he actually possessed the power of a warrior of the ninth rank. The fame of the Supreme Warriors really wasn't hollow.

"I can't let this continue. Otherwise, this Fateguard is going to collapse." The thing which Clayde counted on the most was this Fateguard. In the past, the Holy Emperor himself had bequeathed it to Clayde. This Fateguard came from one of the finest defensive magical scrolls in existence, and was powerful enough to allow Clayde to withstand a single blow from a Saint-level combatant!

Capable of blocking a full-power attack from a Saint-level combatant. As for a ninth-rank combatant, it could take dozens of blows before shattering.

"Clayde, I refuse to believe that the energy of your magical armor is endless and infinite." The totally Dragonformed Linley walked towards Clayde, step by step.

Seeing Linley with spikes jutting from his back, his entire body covered in scales, and in particular with that long, whip-like tail, Clayde felt he had encountered a human-shaped magical beast. In the past, he wouldn't have been the slightest bit afraid, but right now, he had less than a tenth of his usual power!

"Whoosh!" Clayde suddenly scurried forward, flying towards a window.

“Swish!”

Linley’s draconic tail swept over viciously. Despite moving later, it arrived first, landing directly on Clayde’s body. Clayde’s body was sent flying, smashing viciously at a corner of the window. Breaking through the window, Clayde’s body was sent rolling into the courtyard. With a leap, Linley flew out as well, the ground beneath his feet splintering from his jump.

“You still want to escape?”

Linley’s Dragonformed claws and legs all ferociously attacked Clayde, while at the same time, Bebe continuously bit and scratched at Clayde, trying to whittle away the energy in his defensive barrier as quickly as possible.

Relying on his significant combat experience, as well as his natural strength as a warrior of the seventh rank, as well as the defensive power of the Fateguard, Clayde did his best to dodge Linley’s blows and delay as long as he could.

“Protect his Majesty! Protect his Majesty!”

“Roaaar!”

From outside, the sounds of many people shouting could be heard, as well as the roar of a magical beast.

“Linley, today, you are doomed to die.” Clayde was exultant. By now, he could sense that his Fateguard had only expended half of its energy. It had more than enough to continue to block Linley’s attacks. Linley’s gaze grew even colder.

“If one comes, I’ll kill one. If two come, I’ll kill a pair. I will kill however many come!” Linley’s killing intent had boiled to a crescendo.

“Whap!” Linley’s draconic tail smashed viciously down on Clayde, sending him flying into the courtyard’s wall, which immediately began to crack. At the same time, the sharp claws of a black blur fiercely swiped down at Clayde’s body, smashing Clayde hard against the ground yet again.

“Crash!”

The closed gate to the courtyard suddenly split open, sending its shattered shards flying everywhere. A five-meter-long, three-meter-tall lion with a body of pure white fur charged inside. From its mouth, it spat out hundreds of

javelin-sized jade-blue spikes, while behind it, a group of palace experts charged in as well!

## Even if I Die, I'll Kill You!

The group of warriors who had charged in behind the Glacial Snow Lion were all shocked upon seeing the scene within the courtyard.

“What is this monster?”

The creature within the courtyard was covered in black scales, a back covered with a row of sharp spikes that gleamed with a cold, golden light, and an iron-whip-like draconic tail that swung back and forth. In particular, when this monster stared at them, they noticed its strange, dark golden eyes.

These dark golden eyes were filled with heartlessness, coldness, and murder!

“Graaaaaawr!” Not afraid in the slightest, the Glacial Snow Lion was the first to charge forward at the monster.

The Glacial Snow Lion spat a mass of jade-blue javelins from its mouth, but the monster didn't dodge at all, allowing them to strike against his scales. With a thunderous clatter, the air was rent by the sound of the collision. The attack hadn't harmed the monster at all!

“F\*ck off!” A guttural, furious voice rang out from the mouth of the monster.

Its right leg suddenly transformed into a cylindrical blur and viciously smashed against the Glacial Snow Lion's body. The Glacial Snow Lion was actually kicked away! This was a magical beast of the eighth rank, but it was sent flying away by a single kick.

But how could these guards know that having fully Dragonformed, Linley had stepped into the domain of a combatant of the ninth rank!

“Kill him, kill him!” Clayde howled loudly with rage.

Only now did those experts, who had been stunned by this scene, recover. Immediately, all of them let out angry cries as they drew their weapons and charged towards Linley. At the same time, the magical beast companions



belonging to these experts also began to charge at Linley.

Magical beast, Frostwolf. Magical beast, Gorehorse. Magical beast, Mastodon. Magical beast, Bluewind Warbird.

One magical beast after another charged at Linley from the air or from the ground. Linley was like a whirlpool, attracting all of the nearby warriors and magical beasts to attack him. This sort of large-scale focused attack was truly very terrifying.

Linley's death-promising gaze was locked onto Clayde. Bebe continued to attack Clayde nonstop, reducing the energy remaining in Clayde's Fateguard.

"Clayde, today, I must kill you." Linley didn't care about the surrounding warriors in the slightest. Right now, the strongest person present was a warrior of the eighth rank. Although in his Dragonform, Linley was still just an early-stage ninth rank warrior, Linley had inherited one of the strongest traits of the Armored Razorback Wyrms; an incredibly terrifying defense!

The attack of a warrior of the eighth rank, when landing on Linley's black scales, couldn't hurt Linley in the slightest.

The only large-sized man among them, a two-meter-tall, massively muscled man with a waist like a bear swung a massive battleaxe at Linley. On top of the battleaxe was a layer of blazing red light, causing even the temperature of the air itself to rise.

"F\*ck off!"

Linley didn't dodge at all. Balling his fierce claws into a fist, he punched at the axe with astonishing speed, splitting the air with the force of his punch.

"Bam!"

That massive, sturdy battleaxe was directly smashed into smithereens. Linley's fist didn't slow down in the slightest as it pierced through the warrior's chest. And even as his fist penetrated the man's chest, Linley's other hand came piercing in as well...

With a powerful tug from both arms, Linley ripped the warrior into two halves from within. Blood splattered all over Linley's scales, making Linley look all the

more like a demon come from the pits of hell.

“Second Bro!”

The other three warriors screamed with rage. The one whom Linley had killed was one of those four warriors of the eighth rank. The eyes of the three remaining warrior turned red, and alongside their magical beasts, they all charged towards Linley.

“Whap!” Linley’s draconic tail suddenly swept at them from the side.

One of the warriors who had intended to ambush Linley from behind, a tall, skinny, golden-haired man, was struck on the head by the tail. His head shattered, spraying blood everywhere.

“He’s a demon, a demon! Everyone, kill him!” Terrified by Linley’s display of might, everyone began to scream and attack.

More and more people were pouring in from the more distant courtyards, and even some of the guards that had been originally stationed to protect Linley came charging in to attack Linley as well. Because black scales covered Linley’s entire body, even his face, nobody knew... that this monster was Linley!

In everyone’s minds, this was a terrifying demon!

Kill it!

“Your Majesty, hurry and flee!” Two warriors of the eighth rank leapt over to Clayde’s side. But just as they finished speaking, a black shadow charged towards them. These two warriors had extremely fast reaction times though, and with a tremble, their bodies became blurs as well.

“Ah!”

A chunk of flesh from one of the warrior’s shoulders was bitten off, and that black shadow continued to attack that warrior. Relying on fierce claws and sharp teeth, in a very short period of time, over ten pieces of flesh were bitten off that warrior, and blood flowed from everywhere on his body.

Having lost too much blood and too much flesh, the warrior began to stagger and stumble.

“Crunch!”

A sharp paw directly slapped onto his skull, crushing it and killing him on the spot.

“Bebe, focus your attacks on Clayde!” Linley’s voice rang out in Bebe’s mind.

“Got it, Boss!”

“Whoosh!” Clayde had seized this opportunity to jump out the courtyard.

“Shiiiiirk!” Bebe’s high-pitched screech once more split the air. Transforming into a black blur, Bebe smashed directly into the wall at high speed. The already-cracked wall instantly split apart, and Bebe charged straight through, attacking Clayde frantically.

“Kill this demon! Everyone, kill him!” Clayde commanded in a loud voice.

“Your Majesty!”

The people in Linley’s courtyard were growing greater and greater in number, and thousands of soldiers from the palace had come charging in to protect the king as well. Many nobles as well, having noticed the commotion, immediately ordered their people to protect his Majesty. The number of people in Linley’s manor could already be described with the phrase, ‘an ocean of people’.

People were everywhere!

“For honor!”

“For honor!”

A squad of Knights of the Radiant Church immediately rushed in front of Clayde, and all of them simultaneously attacked that lightning-fast black blur. For the sake of protecting his Majesty, a large number of soldiers were willing to ignore their own safety.

“Shkreeeee!”

Bebe’s high-pitched screech once more split the air, and his speed suddenly increased even further. Bebe’s strange blurred body, sharp claws, fierce fangs, and astonishing speed had transformed into the emissary of the god of death, and one warrior after another collapsed.

Bebe directly burrowed through some of their chests. Others were

decapitated, their heads sent flying. The skulls of others were shattered...

Circling around and around, Bebe continued to attack Clayde. Clayde could clearly feel that the energy around his body was continuing to diminish.

“This pet of Linley’s is too terrifying.” Only now did Clayde totally understand how much power Linley had.

Right now, Linley had been totally surrounded and pinned down by an ocean of warriors. He was powerful, true. But under the mass attack of a huge number of magical beasts and warriors, even if he was able to kill a person in a single blow, he would still need to take a long time.

“I can’t delay. Once the Saint-level combatants of the Radiant Church arrive, I won’t have any chance at all.”

Seeing the crazed masses set against him, and the warriors screeching words such as ‘For honor’ and ‘For his Majesty’ and ‘Demon’, Linley grew more and more frantic. What’s more, many magi were lobbing spells at Linley from afar as well.

“Whap!”

“Bam!”

Linley’s body seemed to have transformed into a rainbow, as countless magical spells landed on his body. But Linley’s defensive abilities were simply too terrifying. The Armored Razorback Wyrms were praised as the dragon-type beast with the highest defensive power. There was no question about this.

“Shkreeeee!” Far away, Bebe’s screeching cry could be heard, but Linley was surrounded by a sea of soldiers and warriors. He couldn’t help but feel frantic.

“Clayde!”

“Father! Mother! Today, even if I die, I will kill him. If worse comes to worst, then our family will reunite in the Netherworld! Little Wharton, I entrust the Baruch clan to you!” Linley said to himself. At this moment, Linley no longer cared about or feared death.

“Clayde!!!”

Linley let out a furious roar, and his scale-covered right arm touched his waist.

Suddenly, a beautiful violet flash lit the air.

“Die, all of you, die!”

Linley began to slaughter!

Linley transformed into a tornado, and the violet light flickered around beautifully, its strange radiance flashing here and there. Every place Linley passed by, warriors would fall down, chopped in half or turned into meat paste.

The Godsword, Bloodviolet!

Given Bloodviolet’s sharpness, especially when wielded by the Dragonformed Linley, even warriors of the seventh rank were directly chopped in half.

A massacre!

Wielding Bloodviolet, Linley’s rate of slaughter increased tenfold. Wherever that purple light flashed, groups of warriors would fall to the ground. Linley was charging forward in Clayde’s direction at high speed. Every step forward, he was forced to kill ten people!

Kill!

Kill!

Kill!

Human blood spurted everywhere like fountains, and shattered bones lay everywhere, as common as mud. The black-scale-covered Dragonformed Linley seemed to have truly transformed into a demon from hell. In the face of his massacring charge, one warrior after another collapsed.

Nobody could stop his advance!

“Bam!” With each step, Linley made the earth shake. Bloodviolet danced in his hands, and yet another body collapsed. All of the bushes in the manmade hill nearby had been eradicated long ago, and all of the walls in the manor had toppled as well.

Linley finally arrived by Clayde’s side. Because of Bebe’s constant attacks, Clayde hadn’t been able to flee anywhere.

“Linley, must you kill me?” Clayde glared at Linley.

Linley's lips curved upwards, ever so slightly.

Must?

Ever since his father died and Linley had instructed Hillman to take the warblade 'Slaughterer' out of the Holy Union, Linley had made his mind up. No matter what, he was going to avenge his father.

"Hah!"

His Dragonblood battle-qi exploding, Linley's arms suddenly, bizarrely expanded in size by an inch, as his physical strength was pushed to the limit. Seeming to shatter and slice through the air itself, the Bloodviolet Godsword in his hands cut down viciously on Clayde's body.

"Bam!" Clayde was knocked flying by the force of that blow, and his body viciously slammed against that manmade hill. The boulders atop the manmade hill were sent flying everywhere.

His body turning into a blur, Linley once more appeared in front of him.

Linley seemed to have turned into a tornado, and as he turned, his right leg lashed out fiercely against Clayde's neck. Although this blow was once more guarded against by the Fateguard, Clayde's body was still smashed deep into the ground by the force of that blow.

"Whap!" Immediately following Linley's right leg was Linley's draconic tail.

Like a whip, it struck harshly again and again on Clayde's body. The power that was being slammed onto Clayde's body and through it into the ground was akin to a meteor striking the earth. More than ten large cracks appeared on the ground, and his body sank into the newly created crevice.

The translucent barrier protecting Clayde's body was beginning to tremble, and the seven-colored rainbow was flashing wildly, about to break at any moment.

"It's about to break," Linley exulted wildly.

"Protect his Majesty!" A high-pitched shout rang out.

"Lord Kaiser!"

The warriors who had been terrified by the way they had been slaughtered by Linley and Bebe were ecstatic. A powerfully-built man with long, flowing jade hair charged forward, a greatsword in his hands. The speed of his movements weren't inferior to Linley in the slightest.

Linley's heart shook. "The second warrior of the ninth rank in the Kingdom of Fenlai, Kaiser. Not good!"

"Forget it." Linley didn't even turn to look at Kaiser. He quickly chased after Clayde, who had seized the opportunity to flee out of the crevice he had been smashed into. Clayde's Fateguard defense had been stretched to the limit, and could shatter at any moment. He had to seize this last moment to kill Clayde!

"Stop!" Kaiser howled with rage.

"Bam!"

Linley once again smashed a fist against Clayde, this time landing an uppercut on Clayde's jaw, sending him rising up in the air. Immediately following, Linley's body turned around at high speed and, like a pair of battleaxes, his right leg and his iron-whip-like tail struck in sequence against Clayde's body.

"Bzzzt." A very strange sound emanated from Clayde's body.

Clayde's body was in midair, and the protective barrier around him was trembling nonstop, glowing with that seven-colored rainbow. But just then, in midair, a black blur flashed towards him, sending a vicious claw against that seven-colored rainbow.

"Shatter!"

A clear sound could be heard, and the barrier around Clayde's body broke apart.

"It broke." Seeing this, Linley was wildly happy. He immediately charged directly for Clayde, but right at this moment, Kaiser arrived and chopped viciously at Linley with his greatsword. But Linley didn't care about the sword in the slightest, continuing to charge directly at Clayde.

But just at this moment...

None of the thousands of battling warriors in Linley's manor had noticed that

a person was floating in mid-air, watching from above. Although this person was standing in mid-air, someone staring up at him from below wouldn't be able to see him at all. They would see nothing there.

He was very skinny, bald, and wore a long white robe. His face was calm, and he watched the proceedings below with the icy gaze of a god.

It was his Holiness, the Radiant Church's Holy Emperor himself!



## Won't Accept It

“As I suspected, this genius of the Baruch clan is indeed capable of Dragonforming. Although it isn't quite the same as the Dragonblood Warriors of record, despite his youth, he already has the power of a warrior of the ninth rank. The Dragonblood Warriors live up to their reputation as one of the Four Supreme Warriors.”

The Holy Emperor of the Radiant Church, Heidens, had a hint of a smile on his face as he watched the goings-on below.

The thousand plus casualties below and the blood-stained earth wasn't enough to make the Holy Emperor's heart quiver even slightly.

“Kaiser, stop him!” Clayde shouted frantically.

Clayde had never imagined that despite being in possession of a Fateguard, that he would be beleaguered to this extent. What's more, it was within the Holy Capital of Fenlai City.

“Yes, your Majesty!” Kaiser called out in response, while sweeping his greatsword towards Linley.

Linley didn't try to defend against this attack at all. “Even if I have to take this blow head on, I am going to kill Clayde first.” The death of his parents had filled Linley with boundless hatred towards Clayde. Only by killing Clayde would he be satisfied. Otherwise, even if he died, he would be unsatisfied!

“Thud!” The greatsword slammed against Linley's body.

Linley had been planning to take this blow head-on, but he suddenly realized that, bizarrely, this actually wasn't an attack against him at all. This blow was used to block Linley's charging momentum, while at the same time, Kaiser took advantage of the counterforce to knock himself flying towards Clayde at an astonishing speed.

“Swish!” Bebe once more charged towards Clayde.

“Bam!” That greatsword sliced through the air, blocking Bebe’s way. Bebe used his fierce claws to exchange a vicious blow against the greatsword.

“Clang!”

Bebe only felt a fiery aura emanate from the surface of that greatsword, while at the same time, a fierce gust of battle-qi raged towards him. Bebe immediately dodged quickly, but nonetheless that fiery battle-qi struck his body. However, relying on his astonishing defensive abilities, Bebe only somersaulted through the air once before landing on the ground again.

Kaiser stood in front of Clayde, staring coldly at Linley and Bebe.

“Boss, this guy is really tough!” Bebe’s fur was standing straight up, and he stared fixedly at Kaiser.

Linley could also sense Kaiser’s power. In terms of speed, Kaiser wasn’t a single bit slower than him, and when he struck with his sword, his speed was even more astonishing. This Kaiser was a true, full warrior of the ninth rank, with significant experience as well.

“Who are you? Why are you trying to kill his Majesty?” Sword in hand, Kaiser stared coldly at Linley.

Linley didn’t speak. Tapping his waist, the Bloodviolet Godsword once more appeared in his hands. At the same time, Linley immediately utilized the wind-style supporting spell, Supersonic. A Supersonic spell of the seventh rank was still capable of raising Linley’s speed a bit.

“A double expert, both magus and warrior.” The expression on Kaiser’s face changed.

“Clayde!” Linley’s guttural voice rang out.

Right now, there was a group of warriors surrounding Clayde, but as far as Linley was concerned, aside from that Kaiser, none of them were capable of opposing him.

“Swish!” Linley furiously stomped the ground, causing the ground to split and crack. Relying on that powerful counterforce, Linley transformed into a

merciless black blur and shot straight towards Clayde.

“Whoosh!” Bebe, being spiritually linked with Linley, shot out at the same time.

“Chi! Chi!” The Bloodviolet Godsword transformed into a violet blur of light, piercing directly at Kaiser. With a flip of his wrist, Kaiser’s huge sword moved with surprising agility to block Linley’s Bloodviolet. But just at that moment...

That previously ramrod stiff Bloodviolet Godsword suddenly curved, avoiding Kaiser’s sword and thrusting directly at Kaiser.

It was too close!

Kaiser didn’t have the chance to dodge at all.

“Bam!”

Three centimeters away from Kaiser’s body, the Bloodviolet Godsword suddenly came to a halt, ramming against a layer of blazing red battle-qi that was sprung up to protect Kaiser. As a warrior of the ninth rank, Kaiser was incredibly strong, even a bit more so than Linley.

This blow having failed, Linley didn’t hesitate in the slightest, charging directly towards the nearby Clayde.

“Halt!” Kaiser let out a low shout, about to move to block Linley.

But from the corner of his eyes, Kaiser noticed a black blur suddenly arrive at the back of his neck. Kaiser knew exactly how terrifying this unique magical beast could be, and he didn’t dare to use his battle-qi to forcibly block its fierce claws.

Kaiser hurriedly and agilely pivoted to dodge, putting some distance between him and Bebe. Flipping the greatsword in his hand again, he chopped directly at Bebe.

“Kaiser, come save me!” Clayde called out frantically.

Kaiser couldn’t help but grow anxious. Both Linley and this terrifying magical beast had, without question, the power of a combatant of the ninth rank. What’s more, that magical beast of Linley’s possessed both incredible agility and terrifying defense. Kaiser was confident in his ability to deal with one, but

dealing with two was a major headache.

“Slash!”

As the Bloodviolet Godsword cut through the air, it left behind a trail of severed limbs and sprays of blood.

Linley’s dark gold eyes were fixed firmly upon Clayde, and he charged towards Clayde at high speed. Everyone who sought to block him was bisected by the Bloodviolet Godsword in Linley’s hands. Blood had already dyed every inch of Linley’s black scales!

With each step he took, he killed ten people!

“Slash!” After chopping away the last two warriors guarding Clayde, Linley charged directly towards Clayde.

“Don’t, don’t kill me!” Clayde was now truly afraid.

Kaiser was still being entangled by that astonishingly durable Bebe, and simply wasn’t going to be able to come rescue him. As for the other warriors, they were nothing more than an afterthought to Linley. The power of Linley in his complete Dragonform was enough that he would only fear a combatant of the Saint level. Even most warriors of the ninth rank would not be enough to make Linley afraid.

“Clayde, die.”

This time, Linley didn’t use his sword. With his right claw, he swiped viciously at Clayde’s neck. He wanted to rip Clayde to death with his own hands.

“Ah!” Clayde hurriedly flew backwards at high speed, falling against a manmade hill.

But with a single twitch of his legs, Linley once more appeared in front of him. Those fierce claws arrived directly in front of Clayde’s eyes.

“Father. Mother. I’ve finally avenged you.” Linley’s heart was shaking, and he brought his right claw down with force. The totally unprotected Clayde, in front of Linley, was like a toothless, claw-less animal.

Clayde’s eyes were filled with terror and disbelief.

“Thruuuuum.”

An extremely strange vibration suddenly emanated from the sky. In the blink of an eye, it totally surrounded Linley, making him feel as though he was sunken in quicksand. His entire body had been bound, and he couldn't use any more force with his right claws.

If Linley were to use just a bit more force, he would be able to sever Clayde's neck. But Linley wasn't able to move in the slightest.

Clayde stared, stunned, and then he exulted wildly.

“Ha... hahahaha!”

Clayde began to laugh loudly, and then he slowly retreated several steps before raising his head to stare at the sky. At this moment, a white-robed figure slowly floated over from up above in the sky. It was his Holiness, the Holy Emperor Heidens.

“Your Holiness.” Clayde immediately bowed respectfully.

All of the warriors nearby, Kaiser included, were stunned. But then immediately, they all bowed very respectfully and called out respectfully, “Your Holiness!”

The highest authority within the Holy Union. The man with the authority to depose a ruler from his rule. The Holy Emperor, Heidens, had appeared.

The Holy Emperor walked one step at a time towards Linley, and as he did, Linley suddenly felt as though he had escaped from the quicksand and could now move. But facing the Holy Emperor's gaze, Linley only felt his heart quiver.

“Your Holiness!” At this time, another squad rushed over, with two Cardinals leading them, along with several Executors from the Ecclesiastical Tribunal.

“Heathen!” Guillermo, seeing the fully Dragonformed Linley, was the first to speak, his face changing.

The Holy Emperor Heidens calmly glanced at Guillermo. Guillermo instantly fell silent, not daring to make another sound.

“Get out.”

Linley's guttural voice rang out, causing the Holy Emperor Heidens to look at Linley with some surprise. Despite being affected by the power of his presence, this man still was resisting? Heidens knew very well that his presence was even more powerful than the presence of most Saint-level combatants, because Heidens was carrying several valuable treasures of the Radiant Church on him.

"Surrender," Heidens spoke.

"Whoosh!"

Linley suddenly moved, transforming into a blur as he flew towards Clayde, while striking in an arc towards Clayde with that iron-whip-like draconic tail. Without question, the terrifying power of Linley's tail was enough to kill Clayde with one blow.

Heidens suddenly made a waving gesture with his right hand. "WHAP!" Linley's body was sent flying far away, slamming into a distant manmade hill. Rocks shattered, and blood began to seep out all across Linley's body. From this single blow, his astonishingly sturdy scales had been shattered to the point of allowing blood to be drawn.

Heidens glanced at Guillermo.

Guillermo understood what Heidens wanted. He shouted an order to the Executors of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal. "Take this demon away!"

Instantly, four Executors charged towards Linley.

"Boss!" Bebe's voice rang out in Linley's mind.

Linley was half-kneeling against the manmade hill, and blood was dribbling out of his mouth. "Bebe. Leave. Leave now. While they haven't noticed you, leave!"

"I won't leave." Bebe was crouching off in the distance behind the corner of a wall, but continued to mentally converse with Linley.

"No. With the Holy Emperor present, we no longer have any chance at all. He hasn't noticed you yet, so you have a chance to slip away. Bebe... leave now. I must kill that Clayde. Even if I die, I need you to help me kill him. If even you are caught, in the future I will have no chance at all."

“Boss...”

“Leave! Or else, even if I die, I won’t forgive you!” Linley roared mentally.

In the corner of that wall, Bebe stared at Linley, his little eyes filled with fury, grief, and an unwillingness to depart.

“Leave now!”

Linley mentally howled with fury at him. At this moment, those four Executors had walked to Linley’s side and reached out, intending to subdue Linley. But that half-kneeling Linley suddenly rose to his feet, like a praying mantis attacking from ambush.

“Swish!” A violet light flashed. All four of them were bisected at the waist.

“Die!” Linley charged towards Clayde once again.

The expression on Clayde’s face changed.

“Even if I die, I will kill you first!” Linley howled with rage.

“Hrmph!”

The eyes of the Holy Emperor Heidens flashed coldly, and he let out a sneer. His right hand slapped in Linley’s general direction, and suddenly, a terrifyingly powerful force appeared out of nowhere, surrounding and pressing down Linley from all sides. Linley felt as though an enormous mountain had just slammed onto his body.

“Bam!” Linley was slammed into the ground.

“Crack!” Linley felt that the bones in his body were suddenly broken in over ten different places. Totally paralyzed, he lay there on the ground, unable to move again. Nobody, no matter how strong, would be able to move with so many bones broken.

“Take him away,” Guillermo once again ordered.

“Boss...” Seeing the sorry state Linley was in, tears were flowing down Bebe’s face.

Linley was lying on the ground, totally paralyzed. All the bones in his arms, legs and ribs were shattered. He couldn’t move at all. The black scales covering

him were in even worse shape, and blood flowed out from the flesh beneath the scales, dying his entire body red.

“Boss.”

“Leave! Bebe, leave!” Linley was mentally roaring with rage.

Several Executors of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal roughly lifted Linley up. Perhaps it was because they had just seen Linley murder four of their colleagues, but their hands were not gentle, and as they carried him, they didn’t pay any attention to his wounds. This sort of carrying method caused Linley’s entire body to be filled with agony.

As he was lifted and carried away, Linley continued to stare unblinkingly at Clayde.

“Haha, haha...” Clayde began to laugh again.

Staring at Clayde with those dark gold eyes, Linley roared furiously, “If I don’t kill you, I won’t rest! Even in death, I won’t accept it!” Linley’s voice made the heart of that far-off Bebe quiver.

Hearing these words, Clayde’s heart couldn’t help but quiver as well.

“I, won’t, accept it!” Two trails of tears cascaded down from Linley’s eyes. He had been so close to victory. But in the end, he had still failed to kill Clayde.



## In Dire Straits

Within the hotel at the end of the Greenleaf Road, Yale and a group of people were waiting.

“Young master. His Majesty suffered an attack from some sort of demonic creature at Lord Linley’s manor. Right now, many palace guards as well as the warriors of many noble clans have gone to protect his Majesty,” a golden-haired man in front of Yale said respectfully.

Yale was startled.

He knew that Linley wanted to kill Clayde, and now, Clayde was the target of an assassination attempt. Nine out of ten, this had something to do with Linley.

“I wonder if this so-called ‘demonic creature’ is actually Third Bro.” Yale began to worry.

But Yale could only wait here quietly. He had no other options. Shortly afterwards, another report came. “Young master Yale, that demonic creature has begun a wild slaughterfest. Too many people have died. Lord Linley’s manor has become a river of blood, and is littered with corpses.”

Yale secretly felt shocked.

“Third Bro is really formidable. But I don’t know if Third Bro will be able to escape in the end.” Yale could only continue to wait.

One report after another continued to come.

“Young master Yale, that demonic monster’s violet sword is far too powerful. Wherever that violet flash appears, death follows. Countless people have died within the manor. Of the palace guards, many platoons and even entire companies have been wiped out.”

Upon hearing this, Yale became even more certain.

“A violet sword? Could it be that Bloodviolet sword?” Yale, Reynolds, and George all knew that Linley was in possession of a Bloodviolet Godsword. In particular, Yale suddenly recollected something about Linley’s clan. “The Baruch clan is the clan of the Dragonblood Warriors. Can it be that Linley transformed into a Dragonblood Warrior?”

The so-called ‘demonic creature’ could very well be Linley after having transformed into a Dragonblood Warrior.

Thinking about how his beloved bro was currently being attacked by thousands of men and beasts and was engaging in a wild battle, Yale couldn’t help but worry even more.

“Third Bro!”

Yale’s fists clenched, relaxed, clenched, relaxed. All of the people present could sense his nervousness.

“Young master Yale. His Holiness, the Holy Emperor appeared. He heavily injured that demonic creature, and it has already been dragged back to the Radiant Temple.” The final report came back. Yale’s face turned white, devoid of all blood.

Upon hearing the words, “His Holiness, the Holy Emperor appeared”, Yale knew that things had just gone from bad to worse.

“Squeak squeak!” A black blur suddenly appeared within the hotel.

“Bebe.” Seeing this Shadowmouse, Yale instantly ran over to it.

“Bebe. Where is Third Bro?” Yale immediately looked at Bebe, asking desperately.

The little Shadowmouse, Bebe, didn’t have any of his usual exuberance. He only stared at Yale, then lowered his head and let out a few dejected squeaks. Yale could sense the grief and pain hidden within Bebe’s eyes. Although Bebe was a magical beast, his intelligence was no lower than that of a human.

“Swish.” Bebe’s body flickered, and he suddenly disappeared from in front of Yale.

Yale was startled.

“Young master Yale,” a nearby person said softly.

“Go back. Go find my Second Uncle.” Yale suddenly rose to his feet and issued orders to his men.

Within one of the more secluded private rooms on the ninth floor of the Radiant Temple. Linley had been tossed inside the room like a dying dog. For Linley to be imprisoned within the Radiant Temple was actually still a testament to how highly the Radiant Church valued Linley.

The Radiant Temple was the heart of the Radiant Church.

This was a place which even Saint-level combatants dared not to trespass into.

“Ah.” All the scales on Linley’s body had already retracted back inside. Currently, Linley’s body was covered with blood, and he had more than ten visible wounds. These wounds were all caused by the Holy Emperor, Heidens. His visible wounds were very serious. But his internal wounds were even worse.

The bones of all four of his limbs had been broken. Linley could only grit his teeth as he tried to force his body to move, but all he could accomplish was resting his head against the wall.

“Linley.”

Doehring Cowart flew out of the Coiling Dragon ring. He looked at Linley, and his eyes were filled with affection and helplessness.

“Grandpa Doehring.” Linley looked at Doehring Cowart.

Doehring Cowart sighed mentally towards Linley. “Linley, do you feel any regret?”

“Regret?”

Linley shook his head. “No. In fact, in this life, I have only two desires. The first is to reclaim the lost glory of my clan. The second is to reach the highest pinnacle of power and training that I can reach. But if I do not gain my revenge, I probably won’t even be able to sleep well. I would be in torment my entire life.”

Doehring Cowart nodded. He could understand Linley’s frame of mind.

“I lost. Haha. I lost.”

Linley laughed lightly. His entire body hurt. Right now, most likely any person at all could easily trample him.

He lost!

As soon as the Holy Emperor had appeared, Linley knew.

He lost. And losing meant death.

Linley had been aware of this long ago. In this world, many people died every day. Linley never believed that it was impossible for him to die.

“Linley, you probably won’t die,” Doehring Cowart said.

“Huh?” Linley looked questioningly at Doehring Cowart.

Doehring Cowart laughed calmly. “If that Holy Emperor wanted to kill you, he would’ve killed you long ago. How could it be that he would have acted against you several times, yet still spared your life? In addition... you haven’t considered the fact that most likely, a ruler of a kingdom holds less attraction for him than you do.”

Linley suddenly began to understand a bit.

“The second greatest genius magus in all of history, someone likely to become a Saint-level Grand Magus. And now, the Holy Emperor has discovered that you are a Dragonblood Warrior as well. Most likely, he would be all the more reluctant to kill you now. The Dragonblood Warriors are one of the Supreme Warriors. Upon entering the Saint level, you will definitely be one of the most powerful Saint-level combatants. In terms of attack power alone, you definitely won’t be any inferior to the Holy Emperor himself!” Doehring Cowart said with certainty.

Supreme Warriors were very terrifying.

Most people, upon entering the Saint level, would have to progress through the so-called early-stage, middle-stage, and peak-stage.

But upon entering the Saint level, a Supreme Warrior, especially in Dragonform, would definitely be a peak-stage Saint-level combatant with incredible defense and offense. Even amongst peak-stage Saint-level

combatants, the Supreme Warriors would probably be amongst the most powerful.

“Heidens won’t be willing to kill a genius like you unless there’s absolutely no options available.” After finishing his speech, Doebling Cowart flew back into the Coiling Dragon ring.

Linley’s heart was very calm.

Life, death?

The thing which Linley truly cared about was vengeance.

“I’m afraid that even if he spares me, Heidens won’t allow me to kill Clayde.” Linley knew very well that having failed to kill Clayde this time, in the future, it would be very hard for him to kill Clayde. If he couldn’t kill Clayde, in his heart, Linley wouldn’t be able to accept it.

“Who knows when I will be able to get vengeance.”

Linley’s heart was filled with helplessness.

Within the highest floor of the Radiant Temple. The Holy Emperor, Heidens, was sitting calmly on his seat.

Guillermo was staring at the Holy Emperor in shock. “Your Holiness, that demon was Linley? But... but...”

At first, Guillermo hadn’t known that person was Linley, but after the scales had retracted into Linley’s body, Guillermo discovered his identity. This had totally shocked the man.

“That wasn’t a demon. That was a Dragonblood Warrior!” Heidens glanced calmly at Guillermo.

Guillermo was startled, but then he quickly understood. “Right... the Baruch clan is the clan of the Dragonblood Warriors. But it has been over a thousand years since the Dragonblood warrior clan has produced a Dragonblood Warrior. It’s unimaginable that... that... that Linley was actually... your Holiness, that was a Dragonblood Warrior?”

Remembering how terrifying Linley had appeared, Guillermo felt his heart tremble a bit.

“Perhaps a mutated version. But it should be a Dragonblood Warrior transformation, yes. Otherwise, how could he rise in power so quickly?” Heidens said calmly. “This Linley’s potential is too great. Although this time, his offense was a major one, there are very few outsiders who know that ‘demon’ was actually Linley.”

Guillermo instantly understood Heidens’ meaning.

Linley’s potential is too great?

Guillermo sighed to himself. Linley’s potential was absolutely terrifying. Not only was his potential as a magus incredible, he was also a Supreme Warrior. In both aspects, he was a very terrifying person. If such a person could remain within the Radiant Church, in several decades, the Radiant Church would almost assuredly have another supreme combatant.

“Indeed. Your Holiness, others all say that it was a demon. Aside from those Executors who dragged Linley back, nobody else knows this demon was Linley,” Guillermo said respectfully.

“Oh. Those four. Deal with them,” Heidens said coldly.

“Yes, your Holiness,” Guillermo said respectfully. “It is their good fortune to be able to return to the Lord’s embrace.”

Guillermo then said softly, “Right. Your Holiness, another person knows that the demon is actually Linley.”

“You mean... Clayde?” Heidens said softly.

“Yes, your Holiness,” Guillermo said. Questioningly, he wondered, “Clearly, this Linley has an extremely deep grievance with Clayde, otherwise he wouldn’t have gone to this extent to kill him. Your Holiness, Clayde is the ruler of the Kingdom of Fenlai. If we are to preserve Linley, perhaps we should have a chat with Clayde.”

“Yes, we should have a chat.”

A hint of a smile was on Heidens’ face. “I am very curious. What sort of deep grievance and enmity does Linley have with Clayde?”

Late in the evening, Clayde arrived at the top floor of the Radiant Temple.

“Your Holiness.” Clayde bowed respectfully.

The Holy Emperor, Heidens, was seated on his chair, leafing through a few thick tomes. Without even looking up, he said, “Clayde. In your opinion, who is more important to the Holy Union? You? Or Linley?”

Clayde’s heart thumped hard.

“The Holy Emperor means to preserve Linley?” Clayde’s heart began to grow frantic.

After having experienced this event, he now knew that Linley’s father and mother were killed as a result of him, even though he didn’t do it himself. In terms of responsibility for the deaths of Linley’s parents, he, Clayde, probably bore 90% of the responsibility.

That year in the past, if it hadn’t been for Clayde deciding to take Linley’s mother and offer her up, how could she have ended up dying? And how would Linley’s father have died?

Clayde remembered very clearly that look of unrelenting hatred in Linley’s eyes, even as Linley had been dragged away after being heavily wounded by the Holy Emperor.

“This Linley will fight with me until one of us dies. He cannot be allowed to live,” Clayde said to himself.

“Clayde, the outside world all believe that it was a demon. Nobody knows that it was Linley, yes?” Heidens looked at Clayde.

Hearing these words, Clayde was even more certain of the Holy Emperor’s intentions. He hurriedly said, “Your Holiness, that Linley truly is an incredible talent. Most likely, he is the greatest genius to have appeared in thousands of years, both as a magus as well as a warrior. He is an absolute genius. It is very understandable that your Holiness would desire to have him be of use to the Radiant Church. But... it is already determined that he will not be of service to our Church.”

These words from Clayde caused Heidens to frown. His eyes stared coldly at Clayde.

Clayde's heart quivered in fear.

But he knew that if Linley didn't die, then he would never have a moment's peace again.

"Your Holiness, do you know why Linley wishes to kill me?" Clayde hurriedly said.

"Summarize," Heidens said coldly.

Clayde immediately said, "Your Holiness, the reason Linley wishes to kill me is because twelve years ago, I sent people to abduct his mother. And then, his father, in the course of investigating his mother's disappearance, was killed. His mother and father, it can be said, died because of me."

"The enmity sowed by the deaths of one's parents is indeed a great one." Heidens nodded.

"But your Holiness, do you remember that woman from twelve years ago? That woman I gifted to you, your Holiness?" Clayde looked at Heidens.

Heidens started.

"Are you saying..." The look on Heidens' face changed.

"Right. That woman was Linley's mother!" Clayde said in a resounding, loud voice.

"Your Holiness, if Linley is to remain within the Radiant Church, then as his station rises, he will begin to learn some of the secrets of the Radiant Church. He will definitely discover how and why his mother died. By then... is it even remotely possible that he would still be loyal to the Radiant Church?" Clayde let out a mental sigh of relief.

He trusted that given the situation, Heidens would definitely decide to act appropriately. Yes, Linley's potential was high. But the more powerful Linley became, the greater a threat he would pose to the Radiant Church once he discovered the truth.

"If this is the case... pity. What a waste of a talent." Heidens let out a single sigh.



## **Part II**

# **Heaven and Earth Turned Upside Down**

## The Dusty Affairs of the Past

Hillman was being gripped so tightly by Linley's claws that his clothes were torn open. Scarlet blood slowly leaked out, staining his clothes red, but Hillman didn't notice in the slightest. Staring at Linley, he said in a downcast voice, "Linley, calm down first."

"Tell me." Linley was staring at Hillman.

Hillman said solemnly. "The troop of Knights following you is about to arrive. For now, let's not allow others to know about the affairs of your clan. Come with me first." Hillman shook his shoulders loose of Linley's claws, then grabbed Linley's scaled arms with the intention of pulling him into the ancestral halls... only to find that he was unable to budge Linley.

"Linley!" Hillman turned his head, a spark of anger in his eyes.

"Uncle Hillman, I know how to act." Linley's face was deeply sunken, but he took a deep breath, retracting the scales on his arms into his body and returning to normal. Just as he once more returned the warblade 'Slaughterer' to its case and held it, Linley could hear the sounds of hoofbeats outside drawing near.

The troops of Knights of the Radiant Temple had finally arrived. Linley turned, glancing at them coldly, but paid them no mind. He said directly to Hillman, "Uncle Hillman, lead the way."

"Alright." Seeing that Linley was able to calm down, Hillman felt a little bit better. He immediately led Linley in the direction of the ancestral hall. Linley's face remained sunken. At this moment, aside from Linley himself, perhaps nobody knew that beneath that calm expression there lay hidden an incredibly deep, painful wound.

Neither the Shadowmouse Bebe nor Doehring Cowart made a sound. They were connected to Linley's soul. Naturally, they could feel the unimaginable

grief and pain which Linley was currently suffering.

The wind rose, catching up and hurling into the air countless leaves which had been lying on the unimaginably ancient stone-tiled grounds. *Creaaaak*. Hillman pushed open the door to the ancestral hall, then turned to look back at Linley.

Holding the warblade 'Slaughterer', Linley stepped inside, his face calm. His gaze was fixed upon those rows of spirit tablets placed in the middle of the ancestral hall. Given Linley's current visual acuity, he could clearly read the words on the newest spirit tablet, located at the front.

There were only two words on the front: Hogg Baruch.

Linley felt his mind growing dizzy, as though he was hallucinating. He just stood there for a long moment without moving... and then, still carrying the warblade 'Slaughterer', Linley stepped forward to the stone platform in front of the spirit tablets. He placed the 'Slaughterer' on top of the platform.

Linley looked at the spirit tablet, a peaceful smile appearing on his face. In a soft voice, Linley said, "Father. I'm back."

"I know that all your life, your greatest desire was that we recover our ancestral heirloom and regain the bygone splendor of our clan, the Dragonblood Warrior clan." Linley spoke very carefully and softly, as though he were afraid of disturbing someone. His voice was so gentle and oh-so light.

Linley stared at the spirit tablet. "I didn't disappoint you. I have already brought back to the Baruch clan, to the Dragonblood Warrior clan, our ancestral heirloom, the warblade 'Slaughterer'. Very soon, I will restore our Dragonblood Warrior clan to glory. I will make sure the entire Yulan continent knows of the splendor of our Dragonblood Warrior clan, and will make sure everyone in the Yulan continent knows your name."

"All of this, I will accomplish. I so swear." Suddenly, a fiendish look appeared on Linley's face. "But of course, before I do all of these things... I will first avenge you."

There was no question at all in his mind that his father, Hogg Baruch, had been killed by someone. Given his father's prowess as a warrior of the sixth rank who had been in the prime of his health, there was no way he could've

died to a normal illness. What was more, if he had died of illness then Hillman wouldn't have acted so secretively. Linley's intuition was telling him that his father's death was no ordinary death!

"The person who caused you to die... I will make sure he dies as well!" Within Linley's eyes, once more there seemed to be a hint of that terrifying, dark golden color of the eyes of the Armored Razorback Wurm.

Linley turned to stare at Hillman fiercely. "Uncle Hillman, tell me. How did my father die, exactly? In addition, where was my father buried? Also, you said my father died three months ago. Why didn't you tell me?"

Hillman opened his mouth, but did not speak right away. A long moment passed. "Linley, calm down first," Hillman finally said slowly.

Calm down? How could he calm down?

"I wish so very much that my father could be here and personally see the 'Slaughterer' with his own eyes. I long to tell my father that I have become a Dragonblood Warrior. I deeply desire to see my father's smile, hear his gratified laughter, and see the pride on his face when I assume the Dragonform! However... all of this is now impossible." Linley felt as though his heart had been sliced by knives. Hillman was actually asking him to calm down?

Linley wanted to angrily shout at Hillman, but he restrained from doing so. Taking in a deep, unwilling breath, he swallowed his rage. Staring at Hillman, Linley said, "Uncle Hillman, tell me everything that happened. I want to know everything."

"Your father died three months ago. But before he died, his instructions to me were that only after you had the power of a warrior of the seventh rank could I tell you. Otherwise, I cannot tell you the circumstances surrounding his death," Hillman said solemnly.

"A warrior of the seventh rank?"

"Yes." Hillman nodded slightly. "This was the reason why I went to the Institute to look for you, but didn't inform you of your father's death or why he had died. Your father's dying wishes were that I was to not allow you to learn of his death, so that you could calmly focus on your studies."

Hillman looked at Linley. “Linley, it isn’t that I’m not willing to tell you. It’s that this was your father’s dying wish. I cannot go against it. Only once you become a warrior of the seventh rank would I be willing to tell you everything.”

Linley understood. *A warrior of the seventh rank, eh?* He withdrew a leather-wrapped book from his clothes and handed it to Hillman.

“What’s this?” Hillman looked at it with surprise.

“A magus’ proof of rank.” Linley’s face was calm. Every single magus, from the day he began to be evaluated, would be issued a certificate with his proof of rank. Each time he advanced a rank, there would be a record of it.

Hillman opened the book and saw that under the ‘wind-style’ and ‘earth-style’ entries, there were a total of seven stars. “Seventh rank... a seventh rank dual-element magus?” Hillman was stunned. He stared disbelievingly at Linley.

How old was Linley? Only seventeen years of age. What did a seventeen-year-old dual-element magus of the seventh rank represent? Hillman wasn’t too clear on the specifics, but he knew that in the Kingdom of Fenlai the most powerful magus present was a magus of the eighth rank... but that was an old man, well over a hundred years old.

Hillman remembered how, when he had joined the army, there had been a magus of the seventh rank who had arrived at the same time. He remembered the glory, the pomp of it all. And now, little Linley whom he had watched growing up, had become in the blink of an eye a dual-element magus of the seventh rank.

“This... is this real?” Hillman asked an extremely stupid question. Hillman knew very well that this certificate of rank definitely couldn’t be fake.

“Uncle Hillman. Now you can tell me what happened, right?” Linley stared at Hillman.

Hillman nodded, then headed for the private room behind the ancestral hall. A few moments later, he came out. Walking over to Linley, he withdrew an envelope from his clothes. Presenting it to Linley, he softly said, “This was written by your father right before he died. Once you read it, you will understand.”

His hands trembling, Linley reached out and accepted the envelope. There weren't any words on the envelope itself. He opened it up and withdrew the letter inside, which had two full pages of content.

"Linley: By the time you actually read this letter, I will most likely have died a long, long time ago."

"Towards you and Wharton, my heart is filled with boundless remorse, but there is no way for me to do right by you two any longer. I only hope that you two will be able to live for many years in peace, which is why I have instructed your Uncle Hillman to only provide this letter to you when you become a warrior of the seventh rank."

When he read this, Linley's heart felt sour. "Let me live for a long period of time in peace? I imagine Father never expected me to become a magus of the seventh rank so quickly. After all, it normally takes many years for one to advance from the sixth rank to the seventh rank."

"Linley, I have held a secret within my heart for many years. Your mother did not actually die when giving birth to Wharton."

These words from his father caused Linley's heart to shudder. Ever since he was a child, Linley had known that his mother had died when giving birth to Wharton. But apparently... that was a lie.

"That year, when your mother was pregnant with Wharton, both of us were filled with joy. But the medical facilities at the town of Wushan were simply too poor, so I went with your mother to Fenlai City, where your mother safely gave birth to Wharton. Little Wharton was very adorable, and both of us were overjoyed. Shortly after he was born, filled with joy, your mother and I took young Wharton to the Radiant Temple to pray for him to be blessed. That day, both your mother and I were extremely happy. Afterwards, we left the Radiant Temple and stayed overnight at a hotel in Fenlai City.

"That same night, a group of mysterious people came to the hotel and forcibly abducted your mother. Totally outnumbered, I was only able to protect young Wharton... but I did see that on the arm of one of the assailants, there was a red, spider-like birthmark."

As he read this, Linley himself felt as though he had been transported back to

that night, ten years ago. Under the combined attack of many assailants, unable to ward them all off, his father had only been able to protect Wharton and could only watch powerlessly as his wife was taken. He had been unable to save her.

“I know that this was definitely no an ordinary group of kidnappers. The weakest of them was a warrior of the fourth rank, while the strongest was even stronger than me. Fortunately, their target was only your mother. If they had come for me, I would’ve died long ago. Someone capable of mobilizing a squad such as this would definitely be a major figure in Fenlai City. I didn’t dare to go public about this affair. I took little Wharton back home and told everyone else that your mother had died in childbirth. Only your Uncle Hillman and Housekeeper Hiri knew this secret.”

Seeing this, Linley’s mind was filled with questions. So the strongest of the kidnappers was even stronger than his father, but they didn’t care about his him. Their focus was only about abducting his mother. But why was his mother worth their time to abduct?

“I couldn’t let you know about this. During these past ten or so years, I have kept this secret buried deep in my heart. I didn’t dare tell anyone... and I couldn’t even go by myself to investigate your mother’s whereabouts, or to find out if she was alive or dead, or who that group of people was. I didn’t dare.”

His father’s words caused Linley’s heart to feel so much pain that it clenched.

“I am the successor to the mantle of leadership for the clan of the Dragonblood Warriors. At the very least, I had to raise you until you were fully grown. I could not allow the Baruch lineage to come to an end in my hands. Year after year, I could only secretly endure... but every night, I found it difficult to fall asleep. The question of whether your mother was alive or dead has constantly tormented me. I have endured... I have endured for eleven years!

“Linley, you have made me incredibly proud. First, you became a student at the Ernst Institute, the number one magus institute in the Yulan continent. Then, you became one of the top geniuses there. I am filled with confidence towards your future accomplishment. What’s more, the density of dragonblood in little Wharton’s veins has reached the requisite level. I am extremely proud

of you both. For both of my sons to be so outstanding... I feel that I have done right by the ancestors of the Baruch clan! But despite all of this, I still did not dare to investigate your mother's whereabouts because Wharton needed a large amount of gold to sustain his costly studies.

“And so I have endured for eleven years. But when you came back from the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts and gave me that large sack of magicite crystals, I knew... finally, I could give up everything and go find out whether your mother is alive or not. Although no one has seen your mother in eleven years and there is probably an 80% to 90% chance that she is dead, I am unwilling to give up. Even if I die, I will avenge her.”

Seeing this, Linley's hands began to tremble again. Linley finally understood now. In the past, because he had to support the burden of Wharton's tuition, his father didn't dare to risk his life in investigating his mother's whereabouts. But when he, Linley, had brought back that sack of magicite crystals worth eighty thousand gold coins, his father no longer had any burdens left.

“Finally able to go investigating, I altered my appearance and put on a disguise as I snuck into Fenlai City. I began investigating what happened that year. Unfortunately, too much time had passed. Knowing that one of the assailants had a red spider birthmark on his upper arm, I spent an entire year searching for such a man. Finally, I found that man with the red spider birthmark. Following up on this clue, I continued to investigate. Eventually... I found out who it was that had stood behind this group of assailants.

“These people had been directed to act by a member of the current royal clan of the Kingdom of Fenlai. And that person... was none other than the younger brother of the King of Fenlai: Duke Patterson!”



## The Decision

In the Yulan continent, only an Emperor of an Empire had the authority to give his siblings the title of 'Prince'. The status of a 'Prince' of an Empire was roughly equivalent to that of a 'King' in one of the kingdoms. At most, a King could confer the title of 'Duke' upon his siblings. That was the absolute maximum. Even the 'Grand Dukes' ruling over the duchies were in fact nothing more than Dukes as well. Empire. Kingdom. Duchy. The ranks progressively went down at each level.

Duke Patterson? The younger brother of the King of Fenlai? Linley knew that the Boleyn clan, the royal clan of the Kingdom of Fenlai, was an extremely powerful clan. Both of the Boleyn brothers were extremely powerful warriors. King Clayde was known as the pride of Fenlai, precisely because he was also a warrior of the ninth rank.

As for Patterson, although he couldn't match up to his older brother he was still a warrior of the seventh rank. He was definitely a very powerful figure. "Duke Patterson...?" Linley's heart was filled with a hint of a murderous intent, but he continued to read.

"Disguising myself as a servant, I snuck my way into Duke Patterson's manor. After experiencing countless dangers and using a few special tricks, I was able to kidnap the leader of that mysterious group, a warrior of the seventh rank. After I used some special interrogation methods, he finally confessed. He admitted that his actions were done at the direction of Duke Patterson. But according to what this man said, after they kidnapped your mother Lina, she was sent away under Duke Patterson's orders via a different troop. Clearly, there was another figure behind Duke Patterson controlling things.

"The disappearance of the warrior of the seventh rank aroused the suspicions of Duke Patterson, and I wasn't able to finish my interrogations. Although I had made ample preparations, over the course of killing several experts and fleeing

from Fenlai City I was heavily wounded. Even so, I managed to sneak back home. Aside from your Uncle Hillman, I didn't let anyone else know what had happened. I knew that my injuries were too severe and that I wouldn't have too much time left. That's why I ended up leaving this letter for you.

"Linley, I wasn't a good father. I've always been too cold and severe with you. I don't ask for your forgiveness; I only hope that you will be level-headed and rational. Now that you have the power of the seventh rank, you will most likely have the ability to do some investigating on your own. But you must be careful. Be careful. Be careful! Neither I nor your mother Lina wish for you to die because of us.

"Linley, I'll be leaving now. As of this day, you are the leader of our Baruch clan. I entrust the clan and everything in it to you.

"As I die, my last thoughts are of how dearly I desire to see the warblade 'Slaughterer' with my own two eyes. Alas, I know now that this was just a wild hope. Linley... work hard. The clan now depends on you and little Wharton. In your father's life, he was most proud of you and little Wharton. My two wonderful sons."

On the signature line, there was only a bloodstain.

Flames erupted from Linley's hands. *Hiss...* In the blink of an eye, this letter was burnt to ashes. Hillman, standing off to the side, looked at Linley. Linley had just burnt the last testament of his father to ashes. But Hillman wasn't angry; in fact, he secretly nodded in approval. Although this letter was a legacy, it also contained too many secrets. If it fell into the wrong hands, it would be catastrophic.

Linley turned his head to look at Hillman. "Uncle Hillman. I want to entrust you with something."

"Go ahead." Hillman looked at Linley. He had already made up his mind to assist Linley in getting vengeance.

Linley stretched his arms out, picking up the warblade 'Slaughterer', then turned to look at Hillman. "Uncle Hillman, the 'Slaughterer' is the ancestral heirloom of our Baruch clan. I hope that you can hand the 'Slaughterer' over to my little brother Wharton in the O'Brien Empire. I want you to personally

deliver it!”

“The O’Brien Empire? Then here...” Hillman was beginning to worry about Linley.

Linley said seriously, “Uncle Hillman, don’t be worried. As a dual-element magus of the seventh rank, even the Radiant Church holds me in extremely high regard. Even King Clayde, the ruler of Fenlai, was extremely courteous to me. My safety is not something you need to be concerned about.”

Hillman was just a warrior. He didn’t fully understand what being a seventeen-year-old dual-element magus of the seventh rank truly meant. In fact, he didn’t even know that Linley was now a high-status master sculptor approaching the level of Proulx and Hope Jensen. “If that’s the case, then...” Hillman frowned.

“After you hand this warblade, ‘Slaughterer’, over to my younger brother, assist Grandpa Hiri and stay by my younger brother’s side. Everything here, I can and will handle by myself.” Linley’s voice was deep, and it carried a hint of frost.

In the entire Holy Union, he was alone now. He had no family here anymore. What did he have to fear? Linley had already made up his mind to avenge his father as well as find out what had happened to his mother. Was his mother alive or dead? In the depths of his heart, Linley was still hoping that his mother was alive. Although the chances were beyond slim, Linley was not willing to give up.

“Stay in the O’Brien Empire?” Hillman fell silent for a moment. He had family here in the town of Wushan, after all. But for him, as a warrior of the sixth rank he would be able to make a living for himself anywhere in the world he went.

From within his clothes, Linley withdrew a single magiccrystal card and handed it to Hillman. “Uncle Hillman, you can take your entire family with you. In addition, take this magiccrystal card. This magiccrystal card has not been imprinted yet, and it holds a million gold coins within it. Take this magiccrystal card with you, all the way to the O’Brien Empire.”

“A million gold coins?” Hillman stared at Linley in astonishment. A million gold coins was an absolute fortune. When Hogg was still alive, he had to sell off his

clan's possessions just to earn a few thousand gold coins. Even if he sold off the entire ancestral home, he might not be able to come up with much more than a hundred thousand gold coins. But now, in the blink of an eye, Linley was handing over a magicrystal card with a million gold coins on it. "Linley, you... where did you get this money from?" Hillman had to ask.

"Uncle Hillman, you don't need to ask. In the future, you will know." Linley's heart, at this moment, was filled with grief and rage. He was in no mood to brag about his accomplishments as a sculptor.

Hillman nodded slightly. "Linley, wait a moment." Hillman once more ran into the private room, then came back out with an urn, handing it to Linley.

"Is this...?" Linley's gaze couldn't leave the urn. He seemed to have already guessed what this urn contained.

Hillman instructed, "Linley, these are your father's ashes. When your father died, we didn't dare to publicly announce his death. We didn't even dare to bury him. Our only choice was to place his cremated ashes within the private room as we awaited your return."

Linley accepted the cremation urn. It felt heavy. So very heavy.



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The desolate wind howled. Not too far from the town of Wushan, there was a cemetery filled with countless tombs. Now, a new and extremely lavish tombstone had just been erected. The short-haired Linley was quietly seated cross-legged in front of it.

Linley had spent a full night erecting this tombstone. Given Linley's current level of ability, carrying a few boulders was child's play. Since Linley had already reached the level of a master in sculpting, he was naturally able to carve the boulder into a lavishly beautiful tombstone.

The desolate wind continued to whistle and howl, but Linley just sat there quietly. "Linley." Hillman appeared in front of Linley, carrying the 'Slaughterer' on his back in its case.

Linley didn't open his eyes. He only said, "Uncle Hillman, I've entrusted the 'Slaughterer' to you. I entrust my younger brother, Wharton, to you and Grandpa Hiri as well. Be safe on your way there. I won't send you off."

Hillman looked at the back of Linley, still seated cross-legged. He took another look at the tombstone. Finally, he nodded and silently departed, taking the warblade 'Slaughterer' with him.

From this day forward, there was no one left within the ancient ancestral manor of the Baruch clan aside from Linley and the servants.

Suddenly... Linley opened his eyes. He stared at the tombstone. "Father. I swear to you that I will make them pay a heavy price." Linley rose to his feet, then immediately turned and left. The Shadowmouse, Bebe, still stood on Linley's shoulders, but he seemed to be afraid to make any noise at all.

"Lord Hogg has passed away? Bu-but..." The citizens of the town of Wushan were currently in mourning for Hogg's passing.

"What a wonderful nobleman he was. How could he die like this? Who knows what the future of the town of Wushan will be like now? All these years, Lord Hogg kept the tax rates extremely low. Sometimes, he would even have to pay out of pocket to the kingdom. Where will anyone possibly find another such wonderful noble?" All of the citizens of the town of Wushan remembered and were thankful for Hogg's benevolence.

Strips of white funeral cloths were hanging in front of the Baruch manor. Linley himself was dressed in a set of mourning clothes as well. He was silently kneeling in front of the memorial spirit tablet set up in front of the main hall. The little Shadowmouse, Bebe, was also kneeling next to Linley, not making a sound. It was as though he could feel the pain Linley was suffering.

Tradition called for seven days of ritual filial mourning after the death of a parent. He had come late, but it was now time for the first day of mourning.

"Master Linley, Lord Guillermo is still waiting for your return," the captain of that squad of Knights of the Radiant Church said softly by Linley's side.

Linley turned his head, glancing at him coldly. The captain couldn't help but feel his heart shudder. "Seven days of ritual filial mourning. Within these seven

days, I will not go meet with anyone,” Linley said coldly, and then he fell silent again.

The captain couldn't help but feel resigned. He could imagine what Linley was feeling right now. His father had just died. For his son to observe the ritual filial mourning rites was heaven's law and earth's principle; a matter of course. The captain immediately left the main hall, then instructed his subordinates to head to Fenlai City and report Linley's current situation to the Radiant Church.

“Young master Linley, don't be too heartbroken.” The citizens of the town of Wushan came through in a steady stream to kowtow in front of Hogg's memorial spirit tablet. All of them remembered the benevolence Hogg had shown when he was alive.

Linley didn't speak. He only bowed in thanks to every single visiting citizen.



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This news quickly reached the Radiant Church, but Cardinal Lampson and Cardinal Guillermo weren't too shocked. “Linley's father has passed away?” Guillermo nodded slightly. “No wonder we weren't able to find anything when I sent people to inquire about his father, back when he first became a dual-element magus of the seventh rank. So it was because he had already passed away.”

The Radiant Church had a total of five Cardinals. Linley's matters were mostly handled by Cardinal Guillermo and Cardinal Lampson. “Guillermo, let us quickly prepare some things, then go and pay our respects to Linley's father,” Lampson suggested. Guillermo nodded as well.

Actually, based on Hogg's own status, there was no way a Cardinal of the Radiant Church would go to pay their respects to him. But Hogg was Linley's father, after all, and Linley's future prospects were unlimited. He had already been designated as an important future cornerstone of the Radiant Church. “Alright. It's already dark now. Then... let's head off early in the morning, tomorrow.”

The Kingdom of Fenlai had also already designated Linley as a highly important figure. Once Hogg's death became openly known, the news of his death quickly reached the royal palace of Fenlai. The speed with which they received this news was only slightly slower than that of the Radiant Church.

"Linley's father died?" Clayde nodded to himself as well. When Linley had become a dual-element magus of the seventh rank, he too had sent people to inquire about Linley's father, and he had in fact even told Linley that his father had gone missing. As it turned out, Linley's father had passed away after all. "I'll go pay my respects tomorrow morning." Clayde came to the same decision.

Aside from Clayde, many of the most important people in Fenlai City received this news from the royal palace. Many of them venerated Master Linley, while others wanted to make friends with him. Every single one of them decided to go early next morning to that little backwater town of Wushan, to pay their respects to Linley's father.

While all of this was going on, Linley remained within his ancestral home in the town of Wushan, quietly observing the rites of mourning.

## Assembling at the Town

Late at night. Linley's bedroom.

The sound of muscles and bones rumbling could constantly be heard coming from Linley's body, while Linley's very skin was rising, then falling. Beads of sweat were pouring out of every single pore on Linley's body, but Linley's face was very calm and peaceful. He was currently training in accordance with the Secret Dragonblood Manual.

The first time Linley activated the dragonblood in his veins, he had been vaulted directly to becoming a warrior of the sixth rank. According to the records contained within the Secret Dragonblood Manual, the first time one trained would be when one's dragonblood reached the highest possible density, which is why the rate of improvement would be so fast.

The further down the road the training continued, the harder it would become. This was doubly true upon reaching the ninth rank. If one wished to break through to the Saint level, the amount of time that would be needed was probably more than all the other time spent combined.

"For now, the Radiant Church highly values me. Given my status as a master sculptor, my personal status has dramatically increased as well, but my own personal power isn't enough yet. Although they are courteous to me, that is primarily because of my potential. If I am to gain revenge, I need to become more powerful."

Linley knew full well that he currently didn't have enough power. After all, he couldn't afford to assume the Dragonform and transform into a Dragonblood Warrior when he wanted to kill someone.

Unless the situation was critical, Linley definitely did not want to enter the Dragonblood Warrior form. Once it was discovered that he could transform into a Dragonblood Warrior, things would become very dangerous for him. After all,



the fame of the Dragonblood Warriors was simply too great. Additionally, it was known to all that once a Dragonblood Warrior reached the Saint level, he would definitely be a peak-tier Saint-level combatant.

“Boss, you’re working too hard.” Lying on the bed, Bebe was watching Linley train. Doehring Cowart was also watching from the side. Doehring Cowart could clearly tell what sort of mental state Linley was in.

His father had suddenly died, and he had also found out that his mother hadn’t died in childbirth after all and had instead been abducted. These two pieces of news had suddenly descended upon Linley like twin hammers. This sort of mental blow was far more vicious than Alice’s change of heart.

Doehring Cowart could feel the boundless hatred and murderous desires in Linley’s heart. Doehring Cowart knew very well that if Linley didn’t find an outlet for that hatred, he could very well turn into a murderous demon.

“I hope that Linley will be able to get his vengeance quickly. Otherwise, if he remains in this state for too long, the changes to his heart will become greater and greater.” Doehring Cowart was beginning to worry.



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The next morning.

Many servants were preparing all sorts of edibles within the Baruch clan’s manor. As soon as Linley stepped out of his bedroom, he saw them bustling about.

“Linley, the people who are coming today are most likely important people. Is this how you intend to receive them?” Doehring Cowart appeared by Linley’s side.

Linley and Doehring Cowart had both guessed correctly. The important people of Fenlai City and of the Radiant Church had quickly received word of Linley’s father’s death. 80% to 90% of them had come to pay their respects to Linley’s father, so Linley would naturally have to receive them.

The materials that Linley had prepared could be considered not bad, but the

skill of the chefs was too poor. There were only two chefs in the entire town of Wushan whose cooking skills could be considered adequate.

“You are going to have these two chefs of this small town receive these major personages?” Doehring Cowart laughed.

“Let them taste some of the local dishes of my homeland. This is already courtesy enough.” After speaking, Linley immediately went to eat breakfast. After breakfast, Linley once more went to kneel in front of the memorial spirit tablet, observing the rites of filial mourning. By seven in the morning, hoofsteps could be heard from outside the Baruch clan’s manor as an extremely lavish carriage parked itself outside.

“Third Bro!” A familiar voice called out.

Still kneeling in the main hall, Linley turned his head and saw Yale, George, and Reynolds rush inside. Having suffered two heavy blows, Linley was currently feeling extremely depressed. But upon seeing those three bros whom he had grown up with at the Ernst Institute, a ghost of a smile finally appeared on Linley’s face.

Upon entering the main hall, Yale, George, and Reynolds all knelt down on prayer mats. “Third Bro, I got the news last night about your father’s passing. Overnight, I called over Second Bro and Fourth Bro to travel overnight along with me. I’m sure many nobles will be coming today, so I also brought along several chefs from Fenlai City to come as well,” Yale said in a soft voice.

“Thank you.” Linley could imagine how busy his three bros must have been in the past few hours. First recruiting chefs, then preparing the carriage transport. Most likely, Reynolds and George had hurried over to here directly from the Ernst Institute, meeting Yale on the road at night and then arriving here together.

“Third Bro, don’t be too heartbroken.” George gently patted Linley on the shoulders.

Reynolds was also by Linley’s side. “Linley. No matter what happens, you will always have us three bros. Never ever allow yourself to be struck down by anyone or anything. Remain strong.”

Linley looked at Reynolds, a slight smile appearing on his face. He felt very warm in his heart upon hearing Reynolds, normally the most mischievous of them all, saying such words. No matter when or what, he would always have these three bros.

“Thank you all.” Linley looked at Yale. “Boss Yale, I’d like to hand over the responsibilities of hosting these nobles to you. I have no experience in this area.”

Yale nodded. “Don’t worry. I’ve brought quite a number of people over. They will definitely do a good job of receiving your guests.”



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The quiet little town of Wushan was not quiet at all this day. Time after time, the citizens of the town of Wushan would gather together and discuss the nobles who had just passed by.

“That group in the morning had at least four horses, and that carriage was huge and magnificent. All of those brave knights, wow... I’ve never seen such an awesome looking troop of knights.” An old man sighed with praise as he stared at the troop stationed outside the Baruch clan’s manor.

The locals nearby also nodded in praise. In such an ordinary little town, how often would they have the chance to encounter a wealthy noble? That troop of knights which Linley had brought with him when he had returned, by itself, was already a source of endless discussion amongst the locals.

“What do you guys think? Has young master Linley also become a powerful nobleman in the outside world?” a woman guessed. “Two days ago, I saw Linley lead a powerful troop of knights on his return.”

The town of Wushan was filled with constant chatting and speculation. And then, in the middle of the day, around eleven or so... the earth began to shake again. All the denizens of the town of Wushan could feel that dense, orderly sound of galloping hoof steps. This time, the density of the hoof steps was far heavier than when Yale came.

An extremely powerful mounted unit galloped past first, dressed in beautiful gleaming armor. Behind them were two extremely lavish carriages which were being pulled by four handsome stallions. The people driving the carriages were all extremely powerful-looking warriors. Behind these two carriages were a series of carriages filled with gifts, also under escort by a unit of knights.

All of the citizens of the town of Wushan craned their necks to watch. The majestic aura of the ace regiment of Knights of the Radiant Church charging through made all of the citizens feel as though a mountain was pressing down upon them. All of the citizens felt their hearts trembling, and the beautiful, lavish carriages all gleamed so much it made them squint their eyes. “Who are these people?” The citizens of the town of Wushan were filled with awe.

This carriage procession finally came to a halt in front of the Baruch clan’s manor, where there were many people who were prepared to station and stable these horses and carriages.

“Lord Cardinals Guillermo and Lampson, have arrived!” A loud, high-pitched voice rang out from within the Baruch clan’s manor, causing a huge commotion amongst the denizens of the town of Wushan. It was actually two Cardinals!

In the eyes of the citizens of the Holy Union, the Cardinals of the Radiant Church were all lofty figures. In their hearts, the Cardinals were like the stars in the night sky, beautiful to behold, but untouchable. But today, two Cardinals of the Radiant Church had actually come to the town of Wushan.

*Clatter! Clatter! Clatter!* Hoof steps could be heard yet again. Shortly after the troop with the Cardinals had entered the town, another very similar troop arrived with carriages that seemed even more lavish, with beautiful female maids and palace servants with skin as white as any maiden’s.

The carriage was golden and extremely extravagant, while the mighty knights were exhibiting their top-notch riding skills. The hoof steps were so much in lockstep, they sounded like a single great drumbeat, shaking the hearts of the citizens of the town of Wushan.

The denizens of the town of Wushan were stupefied. “Who... who are these people?” Many denizens hadn’t seen a procession in their entire lives.

When this new troop arrived outside the Baruch clan’s manor, that voice once

more rang out from within the manor. “His Majesty, King Clayde of Fenlai has arrived!”

“His Majesty the King!” All of the citizens of the town looked at each other. To the citizens of a kingdom, the king of a kingdom was the brilliant sun shining in the sky, with power over life and death. And now his Majesty the King, who should have been in his palace, had actually come to the tiny little town of Wushan.

The nonstop clatter of hoof steps didn’t abate. One troop of soldiers came after another. One carriage after another pulled up in front of the Baruch clan’s manor.

“Duke Bonalt of the Kingdom of Fenlai has arrived!”

“Marquis Jebbs of the Kingdom of Fenlai has arrived!”

“Count Juneau of the Kingdom of Fenlai has arrived!”

“Miss Delia of the Leon clan of the Yulan Empire has arrived!”

“Lord Bernard of the Debs clan of the Kingdom of Fenlai has arrived!”

That high-pitched voice rang out again and again, causing the citizens of the town of Wushan to feel totally speechless. What was going on? Why were so many members of the upper class congregating here at the town of Wushan? The citizens of the town of Wushan could guess the reason. The only major event which had occurred at the town of Wushan was Hogg’s death.

But... Hogg was just the noble of a minor town. Could his passing really cause his Majesty the King as well as two Cardinals of the Radiant Church to come? These citizens couldn’t help but think back to the triumphant image from a few days ago of Linley returning with a troop of knights at his back.

“All of this must have something to do with young master Linley.” Although these common citizens didn’t know the specifics of Linley’s situation, they were able to guess.



Within the Baruch clan's main hall. Linley was still kneeling on one side. The Cardinals, the King, the Dukes, the Marquises, the Counts, all either bowed or knelt down with sincerity, paying their respects to the dead.

Although the likes of Cardinal Guillermo only bowed, the only people they ever even bowed to were tremendously important figures. Now today, they were bowing to the departed Hogg.

"Linley, don't be too heartbroken," Guillermo said softly by Linley's side.

"Thank you." Linley bowed fractionally.

"Linley, your father's passing truly fills us all with regret." King Clayde also comforted Linley.

After a while.

"Linley, don't be too heartbroken." A clear voice rang out. Raising his head, Linley saw that Delia, dressed in simple clothes, was there as well, her face filled with concern.

"Thank you," Linley said in a soft voice. Delia nodded fractionally before being led away by servants as well. One noble after another came in to pay their respects to Linley's father. Even that Bernard, leader of the Debs clan, had come to pay his respects.

"Master Linley, don't be too heartbroken," Bernard said courteously.

Linley responded with the same courteous thanks. "Thank you."



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"Duke Patterson of the Kingdom of Fenlai has arrived!" Suddenly, the announcing voice once more rang out from outside.

Linley frowned very slightly. His father's death was linked to Duke Patterson, but Linley knew that his father had disguised himself before entering Duke Patterson's manor. Most likely, Duke Patterson had no idea that Linley's father was the person who had succumbed to the severe injuries caused by his subordinates.

Patterson looked extremely similar to Clayde. Both of them had long, golden hair, with eyes that seemed hawk-like. His waist was straight as a ramrod, and he had the aura of a noble.

Entering the main hall, Patterson bowed respectfully in front of Hogg's memorial spirit tablet.

"Master Linley, don't be too heartbroken," Patterson walked over to Linley and said with sincerity.

Linley raised his head and glanced at Patterson. Seeing the sincere look on Patterson's face, he still responded with the same level of courtesy: "Thank you." From the surface, one couldn't tell that Linley's treatment of Patterson was any different from his treatment of anyone else.

A Nighttime Chat

“Patterson!” Linley silently murmured this name to himself. His mother had been taken away by Patterson’s men eleven years ago. Now, his father had been injured and killed by Patterson’s men over the course of his investigating his mother’s whereabouts.

The murderous intent in Linley’s heart was hidden, like the lava in the bottom of a primed volcano. But one day, it would erupt.

“Boss, let me kill this Patterson for you,” kneeling next to Linley, the little Shadowmouse spoke mentally.

“Don’t move,” Linley shouted back mentally. He remained kneeling inside the main hall, while one noble after another came inside, paying their respects to Linley’s father.



\*

There was a banquet that night, but Linley didn’t attend for a single moment. He remained kneeling inside the hall, observing the rites of filial mourning. Many of the nobles eventually left the town of Wushan late in the afternoon, hurrying back to Fenlai City. But there was still a number who remained behind at the town of Wushan.

For example, Cardinal Guillermo.

For example, Delia.



\*

Ritual filial mourning had to last for seven days. That night, Linley ate some



random food, then returned to his bedroom and prepared to begin his training.

“Linley, do you plan to take revenge for your father?” The white-robed Doehring Cowart appeared by his side.

Linley glanced at Doehring Cowart. “Grandpa Doehring, I absolutely *must* take vengeance for the death of my father. Aside from that... although I know that it was Duke Patterson who sent people to pursue and kill my father, I also need to investigate what happened to my mother. I need to find out if she is alive or dead.”

Killing Patterson was easy. Killing him in a way that would prevent anyone from finding out was much harder. After all, after killing Patterson, Linley needed to continue searching for his mother.

Doehring Cowart nodded slightly. “These are your personal affairs. You decide how to handle them. However, I hope you won’t act rashly. After all, you are still too weak when compared to real top-tier combatants. Even Patterson alone will be hard to handle. You aren’t a match for the combined might of all of his soldiers.”

Linley nodded slightly. Patterson was the younger brother of Clayde. How could he not have a large number of subordinates?

“I expect within a year or so, I should be able to reach the seventh rank as a warrior. I can’t waste any more time.” Linley sat cross-legged on the ground. The dragonblood battle-qi in his body once more began to circulate throughout his entire body, and all of his muscles and bones began to tremble.

Linley could feel his muscles and his bones slowly rise in power, as the tiny dragonblood cells also began to merge with his muscles and bones, raising their durability and toughness. When one first began to train in accordance with the Secret Dragonblood Manual, the pace of improvement would be very fast.

In this training state, Linley didn’t notice the passage of time at all. At roughly around eleven at night. Knock! Knock! Knock! The sound of knocking on the door. At the same time, a familiar voice called out. “Linley. It’s Delia. Can I come in?”

Linley was startled. “Whew.” Linley let out a deep breath. All of his trembling

muscles returned to normal, and the dragonblood battle-qi in his body was once more retracted to his dantian region. Linley looked towards the direction of the door. In his mind, he couldn't help but wonder. *It's late. Why has Delia come to speak with me ?* But he verbally responded, "Come in."

Pushing the door open, Delia stepped inside. Upon seeing Delia, Linley's eyes couldn't help but brighten. At this moment, Delia's golden hair was bound in a simple way. Those few tassels hanging down made her light purple dress seem all the more graceful. Linley had to admit... Delia was a very mesmerizing person. Delia had an aura of nobleness which Alice couldn't match. She was in the primary line of descent for the Yulan Empire's Leon clan, after all.

"Linley, are you okay?" Delia asked in a gentle voice as she walked over to Linley's bed and sat down. She stared at Linley with concern.

Linley couldn't help but feel warmth in his heart. Smiling, he said, "I'm fine."

Delia nodded. "In Fenlai City, I heard about your father's passing. I was a little worried. But... you really are as resilient as I've always felt you are."

"Thank you." Linley continued, "Delia, it's very late. Is there something you wanted to discuss?"

*You idiot.* Next to him, Doehring Cowart was secretly cursing at Linley. *A beautiful girl comes over this late at night to talk with you and comfort you, and you actually ask her what she wants?*

Delia laughed, slightly nervously. But then, she regained her usual calmness. "What, I can't come over to chat with you unless I want something? I've known you since our very first year together at the Ernst Institute. Since when did you decide to keep me at such a distance?"

"N-no, that's not what I meant," Linley said hurriedly.

Delia couldn't help but laugh in delight, but then she let out a long sigh. "Linley, there really is something I want to talk to you about, which is why I came over at such a late hour."

"Go ahead." Linley couldn't help but begin mentally guessing at what Delia was going to say.

Delia said helplessly, “Linley, you should know that this is year 9999 of the Yulan calendar. In eight more months, it will be year 10000 of the Yulan calendar. The first day of each year, the entire Yulan continent celebrates the Yulan Festival. You can imagine how important an event the celebration of the 10000th Yulan Festival will be.”

Linley nodded, not quite understanding why Delia was saying these things.

“Although the entire Yulan continent holds the Yulan festival in high importance, our Yulan Empire holds it in even higher esteem,” Delia continued.

This, Linley understood. After all, the first year of the Yulan calendar was the year when the Yulan Empire had unified the continent. The 10000th Yulan Festival would naturally be an extremely important day within the Yulan Empire.

“My clan has sent out an order. For this Yulan Festival, I must return home. For this Yulan Festival, our Yulan Empire will carry out an empire-wide celebration. Naturally, we main-branch descendants of the Leon clan must return to participate.” Delia looked at Linley. “Linley, the Yulan Empire is very far away from the Holy Alliance. This round trip will most likely take one or two years. Tomorrow, I’ll have to leave and return to my motherland.”

Linley understood Delia’s meaning. In other words, within this next year or so, he probably wouldn’t have a chance to meet with Delia again.

Staring at Linley, Delia bit her lips, then suddenly said, “Linley. Before I leave, can I hug you?”

“Hug?” Linley was stunned. He stared at Delia. He knew very well how Delia felt towards him, but... perhaps because the two of them had interacted too often, Linley had always viewed Delia as nothing more than a close female confidante, ever since the first year they studied together at the Ernst Institute. And especially after that affair with Alice, Linley’s heart had been frozen and locked.

Seeing the look in Delia’s eyes, Linley nodded. A smile appeared on Delia’s face, and she immediately reached out with her arms, embracing Linley by the neck, then pulled herself firmly against Linley’s body. Delia pressed her face gently against Linley’s face as well.

Linley could feel their mutual breaths. He could also smell the enchanting fragrance on Delia's body. In particular, when their faces touched, he could feel the warmth of her skin... all of this caused Linley to feel a very unique sensation.

"Linley. Thank you," Delia murmured into Linley's ear. Linley didn't make a sound.

Releasing him, Delia slowly rose to her feet, her eyes still locked on Linley's. But halfway to her feet, Delia came to a halt. There were only two inches of distance between her eyes and Linley's.

Suddenly, Delia bent down. Her lips just so happened to land and brush against Linley's, causing Linley to be stunned. Delia didn't give Linley the chance to react, as she then quickly stood up. Taking one last look at Linley, she quickly ran out of Linley's bedroom.

"Boss! Did she just force a kiss on you?!?" From the opposite side of the blanket, Bebe popped his tiny head out, staring at Linley.

"You...! Go back to sleep!" Linley mentally shouted at Bebe. Bebe let out a few disgruntled squeaks before returning to the blanket. But Linley still stared at the closed door through which Delia had left. His nose still seemed to be filled with the fragrant aura of Delia's perfume. His face seemed to still feel the warmth of Delia's face.

Rubbing his lips, Linley felt a soft, warm feeling in his heart. The feeling was very similar to the feeling he had that night, when he had hidden with Alice on her balcony and talked the night away.

"Delia..." Shaking his head, Linley cast away all of these extraneous thoughts.

"Linley." Doehring Cowart looked at Linley with interest. "When you had just entered the Ernst Institute and saw this Delia girl for the first time, didn't I say to you, then and there, that this was a beauty in the making? I told you from the very beginning to chase after her. Feeling regretful yet?"

Linley frowned as he looked at Doehring Cowart. "Alright, I'll stop talking." With a twirl of his beard, Doehring Cowart transformed into a beam of light and retreated into the Coiling Dragon ring.

Linley didn't think about this anymore. Once more seating himself cross-

legged, he entered the meditative trance to distill his mageforce.

Early the next morning, Delia led the delegation from the Leon clan away from the town of Wushan, but Linley didn't send her off. He continued to kneel there in the main hall, maintaining his vigil and observing the rites of filial mourning.

In the blink of an eye, the seven days of filial mourning had passed. In the town of Wushan, aside from Linley's bros, there were only two other major personages remaining: Cardinal Lampson and Cardinal Guillermo.

As Cardinals of the Radiant Church, Lampson and Guillermo didn't have anything they had to attend to. After all, most small matters could be handled by their subordinates, making their lives very relaxed. These few days, they spent their time sightseeing around the town of Wushan while occasionally going into Wushan itself.

Morning. The citizens of the town of Wushan were all watching on each side of the street as the delegations from the Radiant Church and from the Dawson Conglomerate began to depart.

"Boss Yale, Second Bro, Fourth Bro. There's something I need to go discuss with Lord Guillermo's party," Linley told his bros, and then left the Dawson Conglomerate's carriage and entered the carriage of Lord Cardinal Guillermo.

Lampson was in the carriage as well. The two Cardinals and Linley shared this carriage, but this carriage had been specially designed for Cardinals of the Radiant Church. It was extremely spacious, with enough space for all three of them to lie down and sleep, if they so desired.

"Linley, you've made up your mind?" Guillermo smiled as he looked at Linley. Previously, Linley had told Guillermo that he needed to discuss the matter of joining the Radiant Church with his father. But now, his father had passed away. Naturally, there was no one else for Linley to discuss this with. By now, he should have an answer for them.

"Lord Guillermo, Lord Lampson. I am still young. I wish... to temporarily assist his Majesty, King Clayde. For now, I think it would be best that I not take up a formal position within the Radiant Church. If in the future, the Radiant Church has need of me, I can be enlisted into your service at any time," Linley said.

Both Guillermo and Lampson smiled. Serve King Clayde? Clayde was the ruler of the Kingdom of Fenlai, while the capital of Fenlai, was also the Holy Capital of the Holy Union. What's more, the ruler of Fenlai was under the direct authority of the Radiant Church. For Linley to serve King Clayde was the same thing as declaring his allegiance to the Radiant Church. "Very good." Lampson was the first to begin grinning. "Linley, this is an extremely wise decision."

But neither Lampson nor Guillermo knew that the reason Linley had come to this decision was because he wanted to investigate his mother's whereabouts. Only through inserting himself into the national affairs of the Kingdom of Fenlai would he have even more opportunities to deal with Duke Patterson in the future.

Guillermo laughed as well. "Then from this moment onwards, you can be considered a member of our Radiant Church. Oh, right. You don't have any incantations for earth and wind spells of the seventh, eighth, or ninth ranks, or any of the forbidden spells, right?"

"Correct." Linley nodded. "I was only able to develop the incantation for the Soaring Technique through analyzing magical theory."

Guillermo said with satisfaction, "The incantation for the Soaring Technique isn't that difficult, but it is still quite impressive that you were able to extrapolate it from the incantation of the Floating Technique. Linley, don't worry. Once we return to the Church, we will send people to deliver all the incantations for spells of the seventh rank and higher to you."

## Writ of Nobility

The Ernst Institute did not make high-level magical incantations of the seventh rank or higher publicly available. If you wanted to learn these higher rank spells, you would have to decide to join a faction.

“Thank you, Lord Guillermo, Lord Lampson,” Linley said gratefully. He couldn’t help but think back to the power of the higher ranked wind spells as described in the books he had read. The higher ranked the spell, the more terrifying its offensive potential, especially in the wind-style. Its offensive spells, in fact, could be considered supreme amongst all styles. The forbidden-level ‘Dimensional Edge’ spell or the ninth-ranked spell “Void Extermination” spell were good examples of why this was the case.

“Linley, how about this. When we return to Fenlai City, I will send someone to inform Clayde of your decision. Clayde will, in short order, confer a writ of nobility upon you and grant you a manor as well.” Guillermo smiled. Linley nodded in response.

“Linley.” The nearby Lampson patted Linley on the shoulders. “You don’t need to worry about any official matters for now. The only thing you need to do is train hard. I very much want to see our Radiant Church have yet another Saint-level combatant in our midst within fifty years.”

Fifty years? Linley was confident that within fifty years, he could become a Saint-level Dragonblood Warrior. But as for becoming a Saint-level Grand Magus in fifty years, the difficulty was too great. “Work hard.” Guillermo also patted Linley on his shoulders in a friendly way.

As the resplendent carriages made their way through the village roads, the nearby trees and lakes soon receded into the distance. In front and behind the carriages, there were rows of knights. Under this resplendent escort, they reached Fenlai City by lunchtime.

Fenlai City. Within the Debs clan's manor. "Alice, can you forgive me?" Kalan was holding Alice's hands, staring into her eyes. A look of helplessness was on Alice's face. She gently nodded. What else could she do?

"Rowling is about to arrive," Alice said softly. "I'm about to go back." Despite everything, as of right now Alice and Kalan still were not formally man and wife. Even if they got engaged, they still would not yet be husband and wife. Only after the formal ceremony would they become husband and wife. Before the wedding, Alice still had to observe the proprieties. Every day, she would go back to her own home.

"Rowling?" Kalan couldn't help but frown upon hearing this name. Rowling was Kalan's principal wife. Because of the fame of the sculpture, 'Awakening From the Dream', that female figure who was the inspiration for the sculpture had also been deeply imprinted into everyone's mind. Once Kalan formally announced his engagement, many people would be able to recognize Alice as that inspiration. In a very short period of time, the Debs family had already selected a principal wife for Kalan.

"Kalan." A happy voice rang out. A golden-haired girl, her hair in pleats, ran over to them happily. This girl looked extremely pure and innocent, yet still possessed the aura of nobility. Especially those large, liquid eyes; they made her seem all the more adorable.

"Rowling. You came." Kalan forced a smile on his face. Kalan had to admit that Rowling was a very adorable girl. Perhaps nobody would refuse to be together with Rowling. Only, in Kalan's heart, the one he truly loved really was Alice.

"Where's Uncle Bernard?" Rowling swept the area with her big eyes.

"Father went out to handle some affairs. I expect he'll be back soon," Kalan replied. Kalan knew exactly where his father had gone and what he was doing. Thanks to the pressure of the Dawson Conglomerate, the businesses of the Debs clan in the City of Fenlai had reached the brink of collapse. Every day, they were losing money. If they continued suffering such losses, they might be able to hold out for another year or half year, but as time went on, even their deep pockets would eventually run dry.

What's more, the clan couldn't just sit there and do nothing. After all, many of



the other clans in Fenlai City were eying them covetously and circling around them. Thus... his father, Bernard, had made a very dangerous decision. To engage in the illicit mining and smuggling of water jade.

Water jade was a type of extremely valuable gemstone. Generally, it was inlaid on top of magistaffs, and was very beneficial to water-style magi. In the Kingdom of Fenlai, there was a fairly large amount of water jade deposits, and the Kingdom of Fenlai had generated an astonishing amount of wealth through water jade mining.

Because water jade was so precious, there naturally were many people who tried to engage in water jade smuggling. But his Majesty, King Clayde, bitterly detested the smuggling of water jade. Every single merchant who had been discovered to be smuggling water jade, King Clayde had ordered to be put to death. But because the profit margin for the smuggling of water jade was simply too enormous, perhaps 500% to 600%, there were still always merchants who were willing to brave this risk.

In the past, there was no need for the Debs clan to take such a dangerous route. But now, things were different. Since all normal business paths had been sealed off by the Dawson Conglomerate, the only choice for the Debs clan was to smuggle!

“There shouldn’t be any problems,” Kalan said to himself. “The business partner which father has selected is the Minister of Finance for the Kingdom of Fenlai, the younger brother of his Majesty, Duke Patterson. With him as our partner, the chance of there being any problems should be fairly low.”

Patterson was the Minister of Finance for the entire Kingdom of Fenlai. Clayde naturally had selected the person he himself trusted the most to assume the weighty responsibility of being in charge of managing the finances of the entire kingdom.

“Uncle Bernard is back.” Rowling’s bright voice sounded out.

Kalan raised his head. Bernard, his face covered with smiles, walked through the door. Seeing Rowling, he laughed. “Rowling, you are here? Have you had dinner yet?”

“Not yet,” Rowling replied.

Bernard nodded. "Tonight, stay here and have dinner with your big brother Kalan. Oh, right, there's something I need to discuss with your big brother Kalan. Why don't you and Alice have a nice chat? Later, I'll have your big brother Kalan spend some time with you." As he spoke, Bernard flicked a glance at Kalan.

Kalan obediently followed by Bernard's side as the two entered a private room. Closing the stone door, they lit the lamps. "Father, what is it?" Kalan asked hurriedly.

A hint of satisfaction was on Bernard's face. "I've already completed my discussions with Duke Patterson. He's already agreed. But we will have to split the profits on this endeavor, fifty-fifty."

"Fifty-fifty?" Kalan stared. "Father, Duke Patterson is being too greedy. Our clan is carrying out the actual smuggling work and spending all of the upfront costs. We are even paying for the horses out of pocket. All he's doing is arranging some safe smuggling routes for us."

It wasn't that Kalan didn't understand the importance of these smuggling routes. But for this project, the Debs clan had invested a truly massive amount of money, while Duke Patterson didn't have to spend a single coin. All he had to do was to use some of his official powers, and he would earn a huge amount of money.

"Fifty-fifty is within our range of acceptability." Bernard laughed calmly. "Duke Patterson isn't just providing us with safe smuggling routes. More importantly, he's betraying his country and betraying his elder brother. If King Clayde found out he probably wouldn't show any mercy, even though Duke Patterson is his little brother."

Kalan nodded slightly. Their partner was a Duke and the Minister of Finance. With him taking on such enormous risks for the sake of arranging a safe smuggling route for their clan, it was fair for him to claim half of the profits.

Bernard and Kalan exited the secret room and returned to the living room, where Alice and Rowling were currently engaged in conversation. "Oh, right. Kalan. I just heard from Patterson that in three more days, his Majesty will personally confer a rank of nobility upon Linley in the royal palace," Bernard

instructed, "Prepare a gift for me. In a few days, I will give it to Linley." Kalan nodded.

Alice, who was chatting with Rowling not too far away, couldn't help but turn her head and glance at them. "Big brother Linley is being conferred a rank of nobility?" Alice murmured to herself.



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Within the royal palace of Fenlai City. Dozens of important ministers were lined up in orderly fashion in the court, while King Clayde was sitting up high, overlooking everyone below.

"Everyone. Today, I have something important to announce." The smile on Clayde's face was radiant, and he spoke in a bright voice. The major ministers who had received the news in advance all knew what King Clayde was going to say. Clayde glanced at an attendant by his side. Instantly, the attendant shouted in a loud voice, "Linley Baruch, enter the palace!"

His voice echoed in the palace. Shortly afterwards, Linley, dressed in black and gold magus robes, entered the palace. All of the nobles and ministers in the palace turned to look at him. "I pay my respects to his Majesty." Linley bowed as he spoke.

Clayde looked at Linley, and a smile appeared on his face like a flower blooming. "Linley, for you to be willing to labor on behalf of our kingdom is something I am extremely gratified about. I now confer upon you the title of Prime Court Magus, and also bequeath upon you the rank of Marquis."

"Does anyone have an objection?" Clayde swept the court with his gaze. All the nobles and ministers stared enviously at Linley, but none of them voiced any objections.

"Your servant thanks you, Majesty!"

Actually, per what Cardinal Guillermo of the Radiant Church had originally said, the Radiant Church was planning on immediately giving Linley the rank of Duke. Linley, however, had felt this would be too amazing and draw too much

attention to himself, especially given that he previously never had a rank of nobility. If he rose in rank too fast, that wouldn't necessarily be a good thing. That was why they decided to go a step lower and confer the rank of Marquis.

“Linley, as the Prime Court Magus and as a Marquis, you naturally can no longer reside as a mere guest of the Dawson Conglomerate. I have already arranged for an extremely peaceful and secluded estate to be granted to you. It is on Greenleaf Road, not too far from the palace,” Clayde said with a smile to Linley.

Linley immediately once more thanked the king for his generosity. In reality, Clayde had already discussed the question of conferring rank and land with Linley in private. Today, they were simply openly announcing it in court.

Upon leaving the palace, Linley engaged in some idle conversation with the other ministers. The highest level of power in the Kingdom of Fenlai was mostly occupied by the Minister of War, the Left Premier, the Right Premier, the Inspector General, and other people on the similar level. These people virtually governed the entirety of affairs in the Kingdom of Fenlai, and most of these people had the rank of Marquis. Even the lowest ranked amongst them, the Inspector General, was a Marquis.

On Greenleaf Road. Linley was seated within his carriage, his eyes closed as he quietly trained. “Lord Linley, we’re here.” The servant’s voice rang out from outside the carriage. Linley opened his eyes, then pushed the curtain to his carriage open. Bebe directly leapt from the carriage seat onto Linley’s shoulders.

“Wow, what a big estate!” Bebe’s eyes were gleaming as he stared at the mansion.

Linley was also carefully inspecting the estate which the ruler of Fenlai had gifted him. This estate took up a vast expanse of land, and the main gate alone was over ten meters wide. Through the open gate, Linley could see there were many male servants, female servants, and also many Knights of the Radiant Temple.

*Not bad.* Linley nodded as he entered. “Milord.” Seeing the gatekeeper bow respectfully, instantly all of the male and female servants in the courtyard

suddenly stopped whatever it was they were doing and bowed respectfully towards Linley. It was important for them to give Linley a good first impression. These servants all knew how incredible their new master was.

“Master Linley, congratulations, congratulations!” Suddenly, a very familiar voice rang out from not far away.

Linley turned his head. “Mr. Bernard.” The person who had come was the leader of the Debs clan, Bernard Debs. Bernard smiled at Linley. “Master Linley, what a coincidence. My clan’s manor is also on Greenleaf Road. We’re only one house over. In the future, it will be quite easy for us to visit each other.”

“Oh.” Thinking back to when he had first rescued Alice and delivered her and Kalan back to Fenlai City, it did seem as though Kalan’s manor was not too far away.

“But Master Linley, your manor is much larger than mine. This manor of yours used to be where his Majesty himself lived,” Bernard said admiringly.

Linley himself felt that this manor was astonishingly large, much larger than his ancestral mansion. To have such an enormous estate in Fenlai City, where each inch of land was as valuable as an inch of gold, was not something mere wealth could accomplish. So this was the former residence of his Majesty, King Clayde? No wonder it was so large!

“Mr. Bernard, I have to head back now. In the future, we’ll be able to chat quite often.” Linley smiled modestly, then turned his head and walked towards his own manor.

Right at this moment, at the gate to the Debs clan’s manor, Kalan, Rowling, and Alice were standing and watching from afar.

## Tomes of Magic

In terms of both furnishings and layout, this estate was definitely first rate. Linley was particularly fond of the Hot Springs Garden.

The Hot Springs Garden within the estate was the place where his Majesty trained when he lived here. Clayde was a warrior of the ninth rank. In order to become such a mighty warrior, naturally he didn't rely solely on his raw talent. He also spent years of painstaking effort.

The right half of the Hot Springs Garden was covered in a large, grassy area, filled with all sorts of exercise equipment. On the left side of the Hot Springs Garden, next to a man-made hill, was a hot springs pool. The hot springs within this pool came naturally from underground. After a day of frenzied training, spending some time in the hot springs pool definitely was a wonderful way of relaxing.

Linley was currently bathing nude within the pool. The bubbling hot water rushed against his skin, making Linley feel so comfortable that his eyes began to close.

"Boss, when are we going to kill that Patterson guy? Last night, during the dinner, I really wanted to kill him for you already." Bebe hopped out of the pool, all the fur on his body wet.

"Don't be impatient." Exiting the hot springs, Linley changed into a clean set of training clothes, then walked over to the grassy area while beginning to mumble the words to a spell. After a few moments, an earthen glow began to cover the ground beneath Linley in a certain area as earth elemental essence began to swirl about him.

Earth magic – Supergravity Field.

Linley immediately leapt into the air, then inverted himself, head pointed down, feet pointing up. Using his two hands, he kept himself upright. Next, he

moved to holding himself up with just one finger on each hand. Relying on just one finger, under the pressure of the Supergravity Field, Linley began to push himself up and down.

“One. Two...” Linley counted silently. Each time he reached a thousand, Linley would change to a different finger. The most important thing for a fighter was his physical conditioning. Only a strong body would be able to accommodate a high amount of battle-qi. Only through this method would he be able to quickly grow strong! Even though he was now a Dragonblood Warrior, he still needed to maintain his daily training regime.

“Hrm?” After training for about half an hour, Linley returned to the normal upright position. Linley stared coldly at the attractive female attendant who had just entered the Hot Springs Garden, carrying a tray with tea and fruit on top of it.

“Mi-milord, here is some fruit and tea.” The female attendant was made somewhat uneasy by Linley’s stare, and she stammered a bit.

“I didn’t call for you,” Linley snapped coldly.

The nervous female attendant stammered, “Milord, I... I was worried that you were thirsty.”

“Thirsty?” Linley glanced at her expressionlessly, then shouted, “Guards!” Instantly, four burly warriors rushed in from outside the Hot Springs Garden. These four warriors all belonged to the Radiant Church, which had dispatched over a hundred knights to safeguard Linley.

“Mercy, milord!” The attendant was so scared, she fell to her knees. In the Yulan continent, nobles had a much higher status than commoners, especially high ranking nobles, who could casually kill a commoner without repercussion. As for Linley, whom even the king of the Kingdom of Fenlai treated courteously? Without question Linley was one of the highest ranking nobles in the Kingdom of Fenlai.

Linley glanced at the attendant. In a cold voice, he said, “Remember this. In the future, when I am in the Hot Springs Garden, no one is permitted entry. Anyone who does enter will be punished with twenty strikes of the military rod.”

“Twenty strikes of the rod?” The attendant’s face turned pale. Military rods were extremely heavy. Even most muscular warriors would not be able to move for ten days or half a month after receiving twenty strikes of a military rod. A physically weak maid might very well die from such a beating.

“Mercy, milord! Mercy!” The female attendant hurriedly pled.

Linley continued, “You should know better, but since this is your first time committing such an offense, I instead sentence you to twenty lashes of a rattan whip. If you make this mistake again, I definitely will not be merciful.”

“Thank you, milord! Thank you, milord!” The female attendant felt relieved. The strikes from a rattan whip would sting quite a bit, possibly causing even more pain than a military rod, but it wouldn’t cause any serious wounds or any internal damage. It would hurt, but it wouldn’t kill.

“Remove her,” Linley ordered the four warriors.

“Yes, Lord Linley.” Two of the warriors stepped forward, pulling the attendant away and frog-marching her out. As for the tea and the fruit on the tray, those were all left on the floor.

Linley turned and once more returned to the grassy area, a slight frown on his face.

The Bloodviolet Godsword was one of Linley’s secret weapons. Although whenever he trained with it, Linley usually made sure to keep it straight and hard, on occasion, Linley would also let it remain flexible and wield it in a bizarre, flowing manner. Linley had to make certain that the secret of the Bloodviolet Godsword was not discovered by anyone. This meant that he could not allow anyone to watch him train.

With his right hand, Linley stroked his waist. Instantly, with a cold, violet flash, an extremely thin violet blade appeared in Linley’s hands.

Swish! From within the Hot Springs Garden, one ray of violet light after another began to appear, while Linley roved back and forth within the garden like a wandering dragon. Having totally merged the support of the wind-style Supersonic spell with his own power, not only was Linley extremely fast, he was also incredibly agile.



Through the usage of the Secret Dragonblood Manual, Linley trained his body. When he was relaxed, he would engage in the carving of sculptures to raise his spiritual energy, while he would enter the meditative trance in the middle of the hot springs to refine his mageforce. His training permeated his every daily activity.

Unfortunately, Linley still was not able to find a good opportunity to make his move against Patterson. After all, he had relatively few encounters with Patterson. If Linley went directly to Patterson's manor, or Patterson came to Linley's residence, once Linley killed Patterson then King Clayde would find out within perhaps just half a day.

No matter how great Linley's potential was, if he murdered King Clayde's own brother, Clayde definitely would not be gentle with him.

Linley was gracefully eating lunch within the main hall. After he finished lunch, Linley once again began thinking about Patterson. "This Patterson fellow hasn't come to visit me at all. Seems like I'll have to personally pay a visit." Linley decided to no longer be the hunter setting a snare for the rabbit. He would head directly to the Patterson manor.

"Milord." Just at this moment, an attendant ran over from outside. "Milord, Lord Cardinal Guillermo of the Radiant Church has arrived."

"Guillermo?" Linley trembled, then he immediately headed for the door, going out to personally welcome Guillermo.

Within the main hall. "Linley, I hear that your recent life has been leisurely and carefree. Every day, either you are training, resting in the hot springs, or engaging in stone sculpting. This sort of life really makes one envious," Guillermo said with a laugh to Linley. Linley nodded and laughed as well.

"But Linley," Guillermo said solemnly, "I must remind you that although your sculptures are worth money, the thing which truly determines a person's status is power! Just look at that nearby Debs clan. Don't they have money? But in terms of status, they are inferior to you."

Linley understood this rationale as well. True, money was a useful thing. But when one reached a certain level, the uses of money would grow fewer and fewer. For example, to a Saint-level combatant, money was nothing more than

a worldly possession. This was also why the Dawson Conglomerate had been willing to offer a hundred million gold coins to acquire Linley and have him join them. To these trading unions, the support of a super-combatant was simply too vital.

“Lord Guillermo, I thank you for your reminder,” Linley said with a smile. Linley didn’t say, of course, that stone sculpting that was the true reason behind him becoming a seventeen-year-old dual-element magus of the seventh rank.

“I’m just making small talk. After all, when you need to rest, you should.” Guillermo glanced at one of the Vicars behind him, who immediately opened the package he had been carrying on his back. After opening the silver-white package, a stone case was revealed within. The Vicar then placed this stone case between Linley and Guillermo. “Lord Guillermo, this is?” But Linley already had an idea as to what this was.

Guillermo laughed with self-satisfaction. “Linley. Open it up yourself.” Linley slowly opened the stone case, lifting up the lid. Within the stone case, there were two tomes made from silk thread. Both of these two tomes appeared to be colored a dark gold color.

“This is...?” Linley looked towards Guillermo.

“Linley, didn’t I previously say that I was going to give to you books regarding magical incantations for wind-style and earth spells? That’s what these two tomes are,” Guillermo laughed.

Linley couldn’t help but feel excited. Magical incantations and the proper method by which one cast the spell were both very important. Otherwise, even if one had enough spiritual energy and mageforce, one still wouldn’t be able to cast more powerful spells. Linley immediately withdrew one of the two books and opened it up.

“Wind-style!” Upon reading the first page, Linley saw that the first page was a general summary regarding this tome. After the summary, it began to describe one wind spell after another. This tome explained everything in great detail, and also clearly explained what to focus on for every single spell.

Linley flipped directly to the section on spells of the seventh rank, feeling astonished as he read through one powerful, intricately designed spell after

another. Linley had to admit, the bygone people who had invented these spells in the past were, without a doubt, absolute geniuses.

“Spell of the ninth rank – Windshadow Technique. It was derived from a combination of the ‘Supersonic’ spell and the ‘Airwings’ spell. It possesses the special effects given by the Airwings spell, great speed, and great agility. It can be described as perfect...”

Seeing the deep, in-depth explanation of the Windshadow spell within this tome, Linley felt all the more excited. A brand new world of magic was beginning to open up in front of him. In the future, with his prowess in earth-style and wind magic as well as the power of a Dragonblood Warrior, his future offensive potential would be enough to cause anyone to shudder.

Seeing how Linley had become totally absorbed with these magical tomes, Guillermo quietly left by himself without making a sound.



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Within the Hot Springs Garden. Linley was seated cross-legged on the grass, all of his muscles and bones quivering as the special dragonblood battle-qi permeated through his body with its force, causing every part of him to experience a constant strengthening.

“Boss, Patterson will be arriving tonight. You still in the mood to train?” Bebe mumbled, lying next to Linley.

Linley opened his eyes and looked at Bebe. “In the mood?” Linley felt bitter. Early this morning, that Duke Patterson had sent word via messenger that tonight, he wanted to come have a one-on-one visit with Linley. As the Minister of Finance, Duke Patterson naturally felt the need to be on good relations with all the other important nobles. These past few days, he had been busy dealing with the issues raised by illegally mining and smuggling water jade, which was why he hadn’t had the time to visit Linley yet.

“I’m not in the mood, no, but I must train. Only when I have enough strength will I be able to do what I want to do,” Linley murmured to himself. Per his

current plans, he would kill Patterson within half a year as well as find out who the person behind Patterson was. After that, Linley would, before the next anniversary of his father's death, either find out what happened to his mother or kill the person behind Patterson.

*Swish! Swish!* "Ahhhh!" A miserable scream suddenly rang out from outside the Hot Springs Garden. Linley immediately leaped atop the man-made hill within the Hot Springs Garden. Standing on the top of the hill, he could clearly see that the bodies of those ten or so Knights of the Radiant Church who had been standing guard had begun to decay. They screamed in agony nonstop as their blood stained the ground.

At the same time, a dense black fog began to billow at high speed towards the Hot Springs Garden from every direction. Wherever this black fog passed, everything, be it animal or human, would begin to corrode and then die.

Linley looked up into the sky. It, too, was now covered with that dense black fog which swept towards him at high speed.

"Someone's here." Linley could sense that within that dense black fog, there were several black blurs that were charging towards him at high speed. There was nowhere for Linley to flee!

"Haaaargh!" At a high speed, Linley descended from the man-made hill and then dove into the hot springs pool as if he were a fish.

## Heavy Casualties

The hot springs water bubbled about. By now, Linley was at the bottom of the hot springs. This hot springs pool wasn't very deep, at most around two meters or so. Right now, Linley was pressing his body against the bottom of the pool. The water of the springs was very clear, and Linley could vaguely see what was going on outside.

*Who are these people? Why were the warriors of the Radiant Church outside unable to take a single blow from them?* Linley's mind was full of suspicions. No matter what, the warriors of the Radiant Church outside were all at least of the fifth rank. Every single one of them possessed the ability to use battle-qi.

Could it be that for some reason, these warriors were not able to use battle-qi to block that black fog? Linley didn't understand what was going on, so for now he did not dare to come out and directly resist the black fog!

"Linley, that black fog should be a fairly common darkness spell known as the 'Corrosive Fog'. You can definitely use battle-qi to resist its effects." Doehring Cowart's voice rang out in Linley's mind.

"But those warriors of the Radiant Church..."

"They should have been attacked by a different sort of spell that bewilders the mind, preventing them from utilizing their battle-qi in time to defend against the spell." This was Doehring Cowart's deduction.

*Gurgle, gurgle.* From around Linley's body, a gust of wind began to billow outwards. It was the wind spell, Windscout. Linley could completely sense everything which was going on outside.

"Quick, no matter what the cost, we have to kill Linley," the leader in black said coldly. The other five black-robed men all nodded, charging towards the hot springs at high speed.

Right at this moment... “Swish!” Like an arrow, Linley shot out of the pool into the air, splattering beads of water everywhere. And then, Linley descended from above them like a fierce tiger leaping down from the mountains, his five fingers formed into claws as he ripped towards the head of one of the black-robed men.

“Hmph.” That black-robed man’s body quivered slightly, as he prepared to use his left arm to forcibly block Linley’s claw attack while stabbing out with the sharp knife in his right hand.

A hint of a vicious smile appeared on Linley’s face. Suddenly, bluish-black Dragonblood battle-qi covered the right arm of Linley, which was attacking with a claw hand. The layer of Dragonblood battle-qi was very thin. Given its thinness and the fact that the surrounding area was full of the dark ‘Corrosive Fog’, it wasn’t very visible at all. Most importantly... sharp claws suddenly appeared from where Linley’s fingernails had been.

*Shiiiiirk!* Linley’s right hand easily pierced through the black-robed man’s shoulder blade. At the same time, Linley once again used force on his right hand, giving it a fierce twist.

*Crack!* The left side of the black-robed man’s chest completely exploded, splattering fresh blood everywhere. The black-robed man died almost instantly, and right before his death he stared in disbelief. His knife had stabbed Linley’s body but didn’t leave a mark at all.

“A seventh rank Earthguard armor is made out of jadestone. Do you think jadestone is so easily overcome?” Linley mused to himself. “Much less, aside from the layer of jadestone armor, the skin on my body can instantly transform into the Dragonblood Warrior’s scales.”

Right now, when under the full Dragonblood Warrior state, Linley had the power of a warrior of the early eighth rank. When using ‘Dragonform’, Linley inherited the hallmark property of the Armored Razorback Wurm; incredible defensive powers. Linley’s black scales were much stronger than the jadestone armor.

Judging from the power of that stab by the black-robed man, he had most likely been an expert of the seventh rank. Unfortunately, the defensive abilities

of that expert of the seventh rank were totally unable to defend against this claw attack by Linley. These were the draconic claws of a transformed Dragonblood Warrior, albeit only in the Demidragon state.

“How is that possible?” The other four black-robed men were stunned. Based on their information, Linley was a dual-element magus of the seventh rank and his warrior abilities were far weaker. They didn’t expect that an assassin of the seventh rank couldn’t withstand a single blow from him. “Our intelligence was wrong!” the leader of the black-robed men standing in the very back cursed mentally.

But Linley only nodded to himself. “It seems that when using a partial transformation, one can catch the opponent off-guard and make them suffer a serious loss.”

“You Cult of Shadows bastards!” Furious roars could be heard ringing out from outside, travelling at high speed towards the Hot Springs Garden. Linley understood that another group of the Knights of the Radiant Church charged with his protection had arrived. Only ten or so people had been killed just now, while his total guard numbered over a hundred.

The expression on the face of the leader of the black-robed men changed. “No matter the cost, kill Linley!” the black-robed leader shouted. He then led the four remaining black-robed men to surround and attack Linley. The black knives in their hands gleamed with a dark aura as they seemingly infused every last bit of their power into the knives in their hands. This was an attack which they were willing to give up their own lives to make!

“Warriors of the seventh rank, right?” Seeing the group attack of these black-robed men, Linley didn’t dodge or hide at all. With his right hand, Linley gently touched his waist. Suddenly... a cold, fierce, brilliant violet light flashed.

At the same time, Linley retreated at high speed towards the back. Of the five people attacking Linley, four remained at their original spots, while the fifth, the leader, hurriedly retreated at high speed.

*Shirrrrrrrrrrk!*

The stomachs of those four black-robed men were sliced open. Their stomach and intestines fell to the ground, and blood sprayed everywhere. “Fast. And

sharp!” The leader of the black-robed men stared in astonishment at Linley. A single sword stroke killing four warriors of the seventh rank. This attack was really too terrifying.

Linley knew very well how sharp this Bloodviolet Godsword was, but Bloodviolet’s natural sharpness alone probably wouldn’t have been enough to penetrate the defense of a magical beast of the seventh rank. Similarly, if a warrior of the seventh rank was to use battle-qi to protect his body, at most Linley would only be able to heavily injure him, not kill him.

But just now, those four black-robed men had been using all of the energy on their attacks! They didn’t expect Linley to have such an incredible sword on him.

“If I want to enhance the power of Bloodviolet, I would have to activate it via my Dragonblood battle-qi. But if I use the Dragonblood battle-qi, the speed of Bloodviolet will be slower than if I used my wind-style mageforce to activate it.” At this moment, Linley was pondering the pros and cons of each.

Just then, it was true that Linley had used a single strike to kill the four of them. What he had relied on was his astonishing speed, an attack so fast that his opponents weren’t able to respond to it! But just relying on speed and the sharpness of his sword would generally only be enough to kill a warrior of the sixth rank, or to heavily wound a warrior of the seventh rank.

Only if the warrior of the seventh rank were to act like these four assassins and concentrate all of their battle-qi on their attack, not caring about his life and sparing nothing for defense, would Linley be able to kill them. “And the leader didn’t suffer much of an injury.” Linley looked at the leader of the black-robed men. This black-robed man’s power should most likely have exceeded the seventh rank.

Using wind-style mageforce on Bloodviolet could make Bloodviolet move faster and make its movements more smooth, but it couldn’t raise the attacking power! But if he were to use Dragonblood battle-qi on Bloodviolet, he could increase the attack power but wouldn’t be able to increase his attack speed.

“You pieces of trash!” Angry roars erupted from right outside the Hot Springs Garden. Clearly, these Knights of the Radiant Church had just seen the corpses



of their companions and were all furious now.

“Linley, you are even more formidable than we thought you were. But unfortunately, you have sided with the Radiant Church. Thus...” The black-robed leader seemed to pay no attention at all to those who were outside, as he spoke in a soft voice to Linley.

The black-robed leader’s voice seemed to carry a certain unique timbre to it. At first, Linley didn’t notice anything, but by the time the black-robed man was halfway through his words, Linley could feel his mind grow a bit blurry and his focus waver. “Thus, you must die!” The black knife of the black-robed man arrived almost instantly at Linley’s chest.

“Linley!” Doehring Cowart’s mental roar echoed in Linley’s mind, instantly bringing Linley back to his senses.

*Crunch!* The black-robed leader stared at his waist in astonishment. His waist had suddenly been bitten almost in half. His exposed muscles were still trembling, and blood was pouring out in a torrent. The black-robed man could clearly feel that his entire body had lost all strength. His life-force was quickly draining away.

“This Shadowmouse...” The black-robed leader stared stupidly at the black Shadowmouse by Linley’s side. A black Shadowmouse should at most be a magical beast of the third or fourth ranks. To this black-robed leader, as a warrior of the eighth rank, a black Shadowmouse shouldn’t be able to injure him at all. This was why the black-robed leader hadn’t paid any attention to it.

But... just then, that little black Shadowmouse had flown over, quickly transformed his jaws into a larger size, and then taken a vicious, giant bite out of his waist.

“Hmph! Let’s see you be cocky now. You should consider it an honor to have died by the hands of I, Bebe.” Bebe stood near the corpse of the black-robed leader, his little head raised proudly.

Linley couldn’t help but laugh. Bebe was a freak of nature that could even withstand the final dying blow of an Armored Razorback Wurm. Bebe was capable of even biting and breaking the tough, massive plated scales of a Velocidragon of the eighth rank! In terms of both offense and defense, Bebe

was now extremely powerful.

His only flaw was, he was simply too small. Even if Bebe managed to land a bite against those giant magical beasts, he might not be able to totally chew through their thick massive scales or skin in one bite.

“Bastard!” Those angrily howling Knights of the Radiant Church charged to Linley’s side. Just as they prepared to do battle with their opponents... they saw the ground littered with corpses.

“Milord, are you alright?” The leader of the knights immediately asked. Right now, Linley’s appearance was very frightening. Both his face and his body were covered with blood.

“I’m fine. I only suffered some light wounds,” Linley said. “You dispose of the corpses. I’ll go take a rest.” As he spoke, Linley immediately walked out of the Hot Springs Garden. And now, when the knights lowered their head to stare at the corpses, they couldn’t help but begin to frown.

The corpse of the black-robed leader was missing half of his waist, as though it had been bitten off, or perhaps cut off by claws. The other four black-robed assassins had been cut cleanly in half, while for the last one, it seemed as though his left chest had entirely exploded, revealing his bones.

“What... how...” The group of knights stared dumbly, their jaws slack. They didn’t imagine that Linley, a magus, could cause his enemies to die like this.



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At the top level of the Radiant Temple. The long, skinny form of the Holy Emperor was covered by a long, whitish-silver robe. He reclined on a chair, leisurely flipping through some books. His bald head shone dazzlingly like the sun.

“Holy Emperor.” The red-robed Guillermo bowed obediently in front of him.

“Hrm?” The Holy Emperor twitched his eyelids, glancing at Guillermo.

Being watched by the Holy Emperor was like being under pressure from a

thirty thousand pound boulder. Guillermo respectfully said, “Holy Emperor, just now, the Cult of Shadows made an assassination attempt against Linley. Fortunately, Linley’s abilities as a warrior are quite profound. He managed to kill all of the attackers, suffering only a light wound.”

“Killed them?” The Holy Emperor looked at Guillermo with his jade-blue eyes. With a light laugh, he said, “Guillermo, the Cult of Shadows is aware that Linley is a dual-element magus of the seventh rank. Could it be that they didn’t send a sufficiently competent force?”

“Holy Emperor, this group of assassins was quite powerful. The lead assassin should also have been a specialist at using mind-bewitching darkness magic,” Guillermo hurriedly said.

The Holy Emperor didn’t say anything else, only faintly smiled as he looked at Guillermo. “Guillermo, are you proposing...?”

Guillermo nodded. “Right. Linley is an important individual who needs to be trained well by the Radiant Church. More importantly, not only does Linley possess high natural talent, he is also an extremely hard worker. I believe that after another fifty years, it is very likely that Linley will become a Saint-level combatant. And in a hundred years... Linley will be one of the ranked Saint-level combatants of the Yulan continent.”

If a man did not prepare for the future, his present would be filled with problems. Both the Radiant Church and the Cult of Shadows had existed for many years now. Even back when the Yulan Empire had unified the Yulan continent, they had existed.

The reason they were able to last for so long, was because they both understood the importance of one thing: Cultivating talent! They were constantly expanding, constantly converting believers, constantly cultivating talent.

Perhaps right now, Linley wasn’t too powerful, but a century later? He might approach the level of the Holy Emperor in power. To a Saint-level combatant, a hundred years was nothing at all.

“That’s why I wish for Linley to receive even better instruction, as well as better protection. In other words... I wish for Linley to go train alongside Lord

‘Fallen Leaf’,” Guillermo said.

“Fallen Leaf?” The Holy Emperor was startled, but then he nodded. “Fine, then. But first, you must go seek his approval. I certainly don’t have the authority to decide on behalf of Fallen Leaf.”

“Yes, Holy Emperor.” Guillermo paid his respects and left.

The Holy Emperor glanced at the departing Guillermo with his jade-blue eyes, and then stared at the sky outside the window. “He killed all of the attackers? Baruch... Baruch... hrm. As I recall, the Baruch clan was one of the clans of the Four Supreme Warriors. The Dragonblood Warrior clan.”

## An Excessive Desire to Kill

During the recent assassination attempt, Linley's side suffered the losses of eighteen Knights of the Radiant Church, four female attendants, and two male attendants. As a result of this, the Radiant Church further strengthened and enlarged the security detail within the estate.

That same night of the assassination, within the manor.

"Linley, are you okay?" King Clayde asked solicitously.

"I'm only slightly wounded, your Majesty." Linley's arm was wrapped with medical gauze.

Actually, Linley hadn't been injured at all during this attack, but he didn't want others to know exactly how powerful he was. Thus, he lightly injured himself on purpose, using his straight chisel to cut himself on his arm.

To Linley, who had previously suffered the pain of the initial Dragonform transformation, this sort of pain was nothing.

"As long as you are fine, Linley." Duke Patterson, who was by King Clayde's side, laughed.

Linley looked at Duke Patterson.

Tonight should have been the night for the meeting between Linley and Duke Patterson, but because of the assassination attempt, the two of them no longer would have the chance to have a private conversation tonight.

"Second brother, it's best that we don't disturb Linley any further. Let's allow him to have a good rest," Clayde turned his head and said.

"Yes, your Majesty." Patterson glanced at Linley, and then followed King Clayde out.

Linley felt as though there were a hint of helplessness in the look Patterson

had given him. Clearly, per Patterson's original plan, there were some things he wished to discuss with Linley in private during their scheduled one-on-one meeting.

But clearly, this was no longer an appropriate time.

In the next few days, the estate once more returned to normal.

"Boss, today is May 18th, right?" Bebe, who was enjoying lunch alongside Linley, suddenly spoke mentally to Linley.

"Right. What is it?" Linley looked at Bebe.

Bebe wrinkled his little nose. Quirking his mouth, he mentally said, "Boss, have you forgotten? That Bernard fellow, the leader of the Debs clan, told us that June 18th would be the date of his son's engagement ceremony. He invited you to attend as well. It's now May 18th. You only have a month left."

"Engagement?"

Linley was startled.

A month from now, Alice and Kalan would be getting engaged.

"That's none of my business." Linley quickly returned to his usual calm demeanor, lowering his head and continuing to eat.

Bebe's beady little eyes rolled around three times, and then he used his tiny little paws to rub at his chin. A look of suspicion on his face, he said, "Could it be that I, Bebe, am mistaken? Shouldn't be the case. I'm so awesome, after all. My judgment is excellent. In his heart, the Boss certainly cares about this affair. If it were me, Bebe, I would smash that little Kalan's skull in with a single paw."

"Lord Linley."

One of the guardian knights entered the main hall. "Lord Linley. Cardinal Guillermo has come."

"Guillermo?" Linley hesitated for just one moment, then he immediately put down his utensils and went to the door.

In the entire hierarchy of the Radiant Church, the person whom Linley was most familiar with and had the best relationship with was probably Cardinal

Guillermo. When someone treated Linley as courteously as Guillermo did, Linley naturally wouldn't act in a high, arrogant manner, as though he thought himself better.

"Linley, there's something I must tell you." Upon seeing Linley, Guillermo began to chuckle with joy as he spoke.

Linley looked at Guillermo questioningly. "What is it?"

Beaming, Guillermo said, "Linley, are you aware that within our Radiant Church, we have a special group of people known as... Ascetics?"

"Yes, I am." Linley nodded.

Previously, when he had been kidnapped by those experts from the Cult of Shadows, it was the Deputy Arbiter of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal as well as an Ascetic and several Executors who had scared the opponents away. Only then had he been able to return to the City of Fenlai.

"Within our Radiant Church, there have been many people obsessed with magic or fighting skills who have enlisted within the ranks of the Ascetics. Put another way, neither the Knights of the Radiant Temple, nor the Ecclesiastical Tribunal, have as many experts amongst their ranks as the Ascetics do."

Guillermo beamed as he patted Linley on the shoulders. "What I am about to tell you is that you have the chance to become the disciple of a legendary Ascetic."

"A legendary Ascetic?" Linley frowned.

Guillermo smiled faintly. "This legendary Ascetic is considered to be at the highest levels, even amongst the Ascetics. He also possesses an extremely high status within our Radiant Church. As for his power, even if we look at the Yulan continent as a whole, there are perhaps only those three freaks of nature who can surpass him in power."

"Three freaks of nature?" Linley instantly grew curious. "Lord Guillermo, who are these three freaks of nature that you speak of?"

While chatting, the two of them walked back to the main hall.

Guillermo didn't reply right away. He glanced at the Vicar next to him, and the

Vicar instantly escorted everyone present away, then obediently stepped out himself, closing the door.

In the entire main hall, only Linley, Guillermo, and Bebe were now present.

“Linley, in the future, it’s possible that you will meet with these people, so it isn’t a big deal if I tell you about them now,” Guillermo said, putting on a mysterious air.

Linley looked at Guillermo curiously.

Guillermo sighed. “Here in the Yulan continent, there are three individuals who have surpassed the existence of the Saint-level combatants. The three ‘freaks of nature’ I talked about, are precisely those three freaks.”

“Those who ascended past the level of Saints? That would make them Gods?” Linley was shocked.

“Right. You can refer to them as Gods.” Guillermo nodded.

Linley immediately perked up his ears to listen closely.

Guillermo slowly said, “Across the entirety of the Yulan continent, there are only three such freaks. The first freak is the ‘High Priest of the Living Temple’ of the Yulan Empire. Many people simply refer to him as the ‘High Priest’. I, at least, have no idea how old the High Priest is. He has been alive for simply too long.”

Linley nodded.

“This second freak has been alive an extremely long time. He is the true ruler of the third most dangerous place in the Yulan continent, the Forest of Darkness. This freak is supposedly a magical beast in nature, but he has already reached the level of being able to transform into a human. Linley, you should already know that when a magical beast reaches the Saint level, he can transform his body enough to speak in human tongues, but is not able to transform into a human form. You can imagine for yourself how terrifying a magical beast who can transform into a human must be.”

Linley nodded slightly.

He had previously heard Doehring Cowart speak of these two individuals.



Even back when Doehring Cowart was alive, these two had been invincible presences.

“And the third person?” Linley asked.

Guillermo sighed. “This third person is also someone who I revere greatly. He was the founding Emperor of the O’Brien Empire, the most militarily powerful empire in the Yulan continent. People call him the ‘War God O’Brien’.”

“O’Brien?” Linley memorized this name.

Given that the O’Brien Empire was named after this person, one could imagine how amazing he was.

“Five thousand years ago, the War God quickly rose to prominence, defeating one Saint-level combatant after another. In that era, there were many super-combatants, such as the Four Supreme Warriors, who appeared during that time period.” Guillermo smiled at Linley.

Linley thought back to his own ancestor, Baruch.

The first leader of the Baruch clan had appeared almost exactly five thousand years ago as well.

“Back then, the Four Supreme Warriors were extremely powerful, but their brilliance was totally eclipsed by the War God. The War God defeated one powerful Saint-level combatant after another, and in the end, even engaged in a great battle with the High Priest, in the air above the Yulan River. During the course of their battle, the shockwaves alone killed over ten thousand people. In the end, both the O’Brien Empire and the Yulan Empire gave up a large amount of territory, allowing it to form into three independent kingdoms which served as buffer zones between these two great Empires.” Guillermo sighed emotionally.

“Linley, in the minds of many, the High Priest is the most powerful human alive. But the War God was actually able to fight to a stalemate with the High Priest. But how few years had the War God been alive for? This is why so many people are in awe of him. Who knows what level of power the War God is now at, after five thousand years of training.” Guillermo sighed with praise.

Linley secretly nodded as well.

“This War God. He fought the High Priest to a stalemate?” Doehring Cowart’s voice rang out in Linley’s mind. “How is that possible?”

Back in Doehring Cowart’s era, the High Priest’s brilliance eclipsed everyone in the world.

In Doehring Cowart’s heart, the High Priest was invincible and undefeatable.

“Grandpa Doehring, every era will see super-combatants emerge. If you, Grandpa Doehring, hadn’t died back then and had continued to train, perhaps one day you would’ve also broken past the Saint level and become an expert on the same level as the High Priest,” Linley mentally said.

Doehring Cowart let out a low sigh and no longer spoke.

“Enough talk about those three freaks. The person I am about to have you meet is only inferior to those three. If you can become his disciple, it will be of great benefit to you as you attempt to increase your power in magic,” Guillermo said.

Linley laughed inside.

As far as someone who was only inferior to those three freaks... wasn’t his own Grandpa Doehring someone who was at the peak of the Saint level?

“What is the name of this Ascetic?” Linley asked.

“His name is... Fallen Leaf.”



\*

Within one of the slums of Fenlai City.

Only now did Linley realize that within Fenlai City, one of the largest, most prosperous cities in the Yulan continent, there was such an impoverished, desolate place. It was far worse off than even his own hometown of Wushan.

At this moment, Linley and Guillermo were walking shoulder-to-shoulder within a foul, dirty alley.

“Lord Guillermo, the Lord Fallen Leaf that you spoke of lives here?” Linley

couldn't believe it.

"Right." Guillermo nodded. "Linley, remember, this Lord Fallen Leaf detests those nobles who think themselves better than others. Thus, you must be modest and courteous, even towards these poor people."

Linley glanced at the poor people lining the streets.

Not too far away, he saw a seven-or eight-year-old child, malnourished to the point of being skin and bones, who wore a foul, oily black rag as his clothes. This child was staring at Linley with fear in his eyes.

Due to his skinniness, his sunken eyes seemed particularly large.

Those innocent eyes made Linley's heart tremble.

Linley didn't do anything, just continued to walk forward alongside Guillermo. On the road, Linley saw one poor child after another. None of them wore any proper clothes, and all of them were extremely poor.

"Here we are," Guillermo suddenly said.

Linley couldn't help but turn his head to look.

They were standing in front of a casually erected metal frame-like dwelling. An old man who looked like a beggar sat in the middle of the building. The old man was so skinny that it made one's heart quiver, and all the skin on his body was sagging down. His hands were like the claws of a chicken, only skin and bone.

This old fellow was looking at Linley with curiosity.

"Lord Fallen Leaf," Guillermo said respectfully.

"He really is Lord Fallen Leaf?" Linley wasn't sure in his heart, but seeing Guillermo behave in such a manner, he was forced to believe it.

But could this old man in front of him, who looked like a beggar that could be blown down by a good gust of wind, really be the high Saint-level combatant, Lord 'Fallen Leaf'?

"Guillermo, this is the one you mentioned to me, the so-called kid with talent?" The old beggar asked.

“Yes, Lord Fallen Leaf,” Guillermo said respectfully.

“Grandpa Fallen Leaf, Grandpa Fallen Leaf, quick, help save my mother. She was beaten and injured by someone!” A youthful voice rang out, then a girl came running in, carrying her skinny mother on her back.

The old beggar immediately turned around and stretched his right hand out.

Surrounded by a holy light, that heavily wounded woman began to heal at an astonishing speed.

The old beggar turned back to look at Linley. “I will only teach those with kind hearts and pure souls. But you... your heart is filled with an excessive desire to kill. I will not teach you.”

Guillermo couldn't help but be astonished by these words.

“An excessive desire to kill?” A hint of a smile appeared on Linley's face.

The need to seek vengeance on behalf of his parents had caused unspeakable pain and torment to Linley. Every minute, he desired to kill Patterson, but he continued to force himself to be calm and to not be rash. But this sort of constant self-repression did indeed cause Linley's killing urge to only grow greater and greater.

“Then, Lord Fallen Leaf, I take my leave.” Linley bowed slightly, then turned and left.

The old beggar had originally wanted to say a few extra words. Upon seeing Linley turn and leave so cleanly and bluntly, he couldn't help but be startled. But then, a hint of a smile appeared on his face.

## The Engagement

“Lord Fallen Leaf.” Seeing how impolite Linley had been, Guillermo hurriedly apologized, “Lord Fallen Leaf, this Linley is only seventeen years old this year. Lord Fallen Leaf, please forgive his discourtesy.”

Guillermo knew very well what a great amount of influence this Fallen Leaf had within the Radiant Church. This Lord Fallen Leaf could be considered the spiritual leader of the entire Ascetic branch. Even the Holy Emperor himself didn’t have the ability to force him to go against his own will.

Using his skinny, chicken-claw like right hand, Fallen Leaf stroked his straggly beard. With curiosity, he watched Linley’s departing back. “Discourtesy? No, no. He wasn’t exactly discourteous. It can only be said that this kid acts very firmly and unwaveringly.”

Guillermo was startled.

He didn’t expect that this Lord Fallen Leaf, who initially had a poor impression of Linley, would now praise him.

“Guillermo.” Fallen Leaf looked at Guillermo.

“Lord Fallen Leaf, I await your instructions,” Guillermo said respectfully.

Smiling, Fallen Leaf said, “This Linley’s heart is filled with murderous intent, and he is firm and unwavering. I think a person like him will never hesitate in his actions, whether it be in killing or in anything else. A person like this is very much suited to be the sharp sword of the Radiant Church.”

Guillermo understood what Fallen Leaf meant.

Although the Radiant Church urged people to follow their better natures, towards the followers of other religions, the Radiant Church was ruthless and merciless. Naturally, this would require ruthless and merciless people. This was why the Ecclesiastical Tribunal of the Church was originally formed.

“Perhaps in the future, this kid, Linley, will become the new Praetor of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal,” Fallen Leaf said softly.

Guillermo couldn't help but turn to look at Linley's departing back.

Become the Praetor of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal?

Guillermo knew very well that the Praetor of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal could be considered the second highest ranking person within the Radiant Church. In fact, from some standpoints, it could be considered that the position of the Praetor of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal was on par with that of the Holy Emperor.

The Holy Emperor was, on the surface, the leader of the Radiant Church who wielded the most power.

But the Praetor of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal was the dark underside of the Radiant Church, the leader of the most powerful military force within the Church!

“Lord Fallen Leaf, are you willing to guide him?” Guillermo suddenly asked.

But Fallen Leaf still shook his head.

“Why?” Guillermo was confused. Since Fallen Leaf appreciated Linley, why wasn't he willing to train him?

Fallen Leaf shook his head. “My training methods are not suited for him. My way requires a pure heart, and is suited for someone whose heart faces the light. But as for him... the path he walks is the path of slaughter.”

Guillermo nodded.

“Guillermo, there's no need for you to find another master for him. A truly powerful person will rely on himself to find a path most suitable for himself. The teachings of others are, after all, based on their own ways.”

Fallen Leaf looked at Guillermo. “You are an Arch Magus of the ninth rank. Why, then, have I never instructed you? It's precisely because of this reason. Even if I tell you about what I have comprehended and my insights, you still will not succeed, because only after countless personal experiences will your soul transform, allowing you to comprehend deeper levels of mysteries. Only then will you succeed.”

“Remember. Rely on yourself.” Fallen Leaf smiled.

Guillermo nodded.

He hadn’t yet entered the Saint level, so there was no way for him to comprehend what the difference between the Saint level and the ninth rank was. Although at times, he wondered if Fallen Leaf was intentionally withholding valuable guidance from him, upon seeing Fallen Leaf’s sincere gaze and hearing his sincere voice, he believed him.

“Perhaps I really do have to rely on myself.”

Guillermo had been held at the ninth rank as a magus for a long time, now. He deeply desired to make a breakthrough.

After all, between the ninth rank and the Saint level, the difference between the two was like that of the heavens and the earth.



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Within Linley’s manor. The Hot Springs Garden.

Next to the hot springs pool, Linley was quietly seated in the meditative trance.

“Shudder, shudder.” Linley’s entire body was constantly emitting strange noises, as his bones and muscles continuously shuddered. Beads of sweat constantly flowed down his body.

Training in accordance with the Secret Dragonblood Manual was ten times more effective than using ordinary battle-qi training methods.

But this was only natural. After all, the requirements for one to be able to use the Secret Dragonblood Manual were also extremely intense.

“Why is training for humans so difficult? You even require all sorts of secret manuals that require different body types.” Lying next to Linley, Bebe’s little head turned to look at Linley, his mind full of questions.

He was a magical beast, and his training was very simple. He would directly absorb darkness-style elemental essence from the outside world, drawing it

into his body and into his magicite core.

There weren't any secrets. It was just a very natural absorption process.



\*

Linley continued to live this sort of quiet life, spending most of his time each day in training.

Using several high-quality training methods at the same time, he pushed his body's capacity for punishment to the maximum.

In the blink of an eye, over ten days passed.

"Whoosh!"

Wielding the Bloodviolet Godsword in his hands, Linley tested out one attack after another.

Which angle allowed the sword to strike out the fastest?

How to control the vibrations of Bloodviolet to reduce the hindrance of the natural air friction, and to make his sword move faster?

Time and time again, he painstakingly trained in striking with his sword.

Each time Linley made his move, a brilliant violet flash would appear.

The speed of these blows was enough to make one's heart quail.

But Linley was still not satisfied. He constantly pursued improvement, perfection. Using his understanding of wind elemental essence which was granted to him by his wind magic, he trained hard to make Bloodviolet move even quicker and more fluidly.

"Milord!" A voice called out from outside the Hot Springs Garden.

Linley paused. With a movement of his hand, the Bloodviolet Godsword in his hand disappeared. Nobody could notice that this Bloodviolet sword had wrapped around Linley's waist now.

Even if a normal person paid attention to his belt, they would only think it to be a purple belt.



“Enter.” Only now did Linley speak.

Instantly, a beautiful maid came running in at high speed. A look of worship on her face, she looked at Linley, and then immediately lowered her head and said respectfully, “Milord, the Debs clan has sent someone over with an invitation card.” As she spoke, she offered the invitation card to Linley.

Linley looked at the invitation card.

The invitation card was red in color, while the trimmings were golden. The words ‘invitation card’ were written on top in bright, bold characters.

“Invitation card?”

Linley accepted the invitation card, and then opened it. Indeed, the contents of the card were exactly what he had thought it would be.

“On June 18th, Kalan, Rowling, and Alice will carry out their engagement ceremony. Who is this Rowling?” Staring at the invitation card, Linley frowned.

“You can leave now,” Linley said calmly.

“Yes, milord,” the attendant said respectfully, then she departed from the Hot Springs Garden.

“Boss, is that Debs clan arranging the engagement ceremony for Alice?” Bebe leapt onto Linley’s shoulders, then stretched his little head out to peer at the card.

“Uh, Rowling? Who is Rowling?” Bebe looked at Linley suspiciously.

Doehring Cowart also appeared next to Linley. Seeing the invitation letter, a hint of a smile appeared on his face.

“Grandpa Doehring.” Linley turned to look at Doehring Cowart.

“Are you wondering who Rowling is?” Doehring Cowart really was someone who had only gotten craftier with age. He instantly understood. “It’s simple. Your sculpture, ‘Awakening From the Dream’, made many people familiar with Alice’s appearance. Although they don’t know who Alice is, once the engagement ceremony is publicized, many people will see Alice. By then, they will definitely recognize her as being the mold for your creation of ‘Awakening From the Dream’. The love story contained within your sculpture is clearly

visible to anyone who has ever analyzed stone sculpting. And precisely for this reason, the Debs clan definitely is not willing to allow Alice to become Kalan's principal wife. This Rowling is most likely going to be Kalan's principal wife."

Linley was stunned.

Alice... wasn't going to be Kalan's principal wife?

In the Yulan continent, the principal wife held a high status in the household, while the secondary wives held a much lower status.

"Because of me?" Instantly, Linley's emotions grew complicated.

Because of his sculpture, Alice could no longer be Kalan's principal wife.

"Linley, do you intend to go to this engagement ceremony?" Doehring Cowart asked.

"Yes. Of course." Linley's eyes hardened, and then he laughed. "Bernard has invited me several times now. This time, he specially sent over an invitation card. How could I refuse?"

Linley stared up at the blue sky, where wisps of silk-like clouds were floating about.

Long ago, he had sat on the grass alongside Alice and stared up at this sort of blue sky.

June 18th.

According to the priests of the Radiant Church, this was an extremely propitious day. Thus, the Debs clan chose to hold the engagement ceremony on this day.

This day, the front of the Debs clan's manor was jam packed with carriages and people.

Major nobles, wealthy magnates, beautiful noblewomen, dazzling young noble ladies, handsome noble youths... today, it could be said that the Debs clan's manor had more nobles present than any other place in Fenlai City.

"Lord Marquis Linley has arrived!"

The voice of the receiver for the Debs clan shot up two octaves as Linley,

dressed in a black gentleman's outfit, strode into the main hall of the Debs clan.

Virtually all of the nobles within the main hall stopped their conversations and turned to look at Linley.

Linley glanced around the room, a slight smile on his lips. Linley's demeanor was totally in keeping with the magnificent presence of the upper nobility.

"Lord Linley, welcome!"

Bernard, who was previously chatting with some other guests, quickly walked towards Linley's direction. Kalan, who was the leading role for this event, came by as well at Bernard's side.

"Mr. Bernard." Linley smiled. "Congratulations on your son's engagement, to two beautiful women, no less."

"Thank you, thank you," Bernard said warmly.

Kalan also said respectfully, "Lord Linley, welcome to our home. I hope you will enjoy yourself today."

Linley glanced at Kalan, but only nodded. Without speaking to him, Linley looked back at Bernard. "Lord Bernard, please feel free to take care of your other guests. I'll just find a place to stand."



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The main hall of the Debs clan was extremely large. Hundreds of nobles and magnates were within it, but they didn't feel the slightest bit crowded. The rich noblewomen and the rich young noble ladies were all attired beautifully, strutting through the crowd like proud peacocks.

Especially after Linley arrived. Many of the rich young noble ladies 'unconsciously' drew closer to him.

"Lord Linley, you are so amazing. I've trained in stone sculpting for three years now, but I'm not even able to sculpt a basic shape yet," a young noble lady with a head of beautiful brown hair said warmly to Linley. "Lord Linley, you are really so incredible. You are only a bit older than us, but you've already approached

the level of Proulx and Hope Jensen. Lord Linley, can you help teach me?"

This young noble lady looked hopefully at Linley with her big, beautiful eyes.

"Stone sculpting requires sufficient wrist strength. For such soft, beautiful ladies like yourself, it's actually better if you just learned how to paint," Linley said with a superficial smile.

As he spoke, Linley felt helpless.

Perhaps it was because all of these young noble ladies all knew that Linley was not yet married, but they all came to bother Linley, one after another.

And of course, the parents of these young noble ladies were more than happy to just sit and watch.

Because virtually all of the nobles within the Kingdom of Fenlai knew that if someone could become in-laws with Linley, their clan would rise in stature by leaps and bounds!

What sort of a figure was Linley?

He was already the Prime Court Magus, but virtually all of the nobles knew that he was only serving the Kingdom of Fenlai in name. In the future, he would definitely become an important figure within the Radiant Church. In the future, his position might be higher than that of even the ruler of Fenlai!

"Linley." A bright voice rang out.

Linley turned around. "Your Majesty."

The young noble ladies surrounding him all made their curtsies, no longer daring to entangle him. Only now did Linley secretly let out a breath as he headed towards Clayde. When he was alongside the king, at least those young noble ladies wouldn't dare to bother him.

"Linley, see anyone you fancy?" Clayde whispered teasingly into Linley's ears as Linley drew near.

Linley couldn't help but cast a helpless glance at Clayde. "Your Majesty, there's no need to tease me like this, is there?"

"Haha..." Clayde couldn't help but break into a loud laugh.

Suddenly, the entire main hall fell silent. Clayde also turned his head to stare at the door to the main hall, his eyes shining. “Hey. There’s the leading females for tonight.”

Linley turned to look as well.

Kalan was holding a beautiful woman’s hand on each side. Both of these women were wearing beautiful full dresses, while the beautiful adornments in their golden hair shimmered brightly.

One was Rowling. The other was Alice.

“Alice.”

Linley’s gaze rested for a moment on Alice. Alice was more beautifully made up today than she had ever been before. But this time, the person holding her hand was Kalan.

“Oh, my goddess! Isn’t this the ‘goddess’ which Master Linley carved into ‘Awakening From the Dream’?” Suddenly, a noble let out a startled shout.

The main hall was instantly filled with clamorous discussion.

Aside from the few people who already knew what Alice looked like, the vast majority of the people present had no idea what Alice’s appearance was. But they had seen the sculpture, ‘Awakening From the Dream’. Many of the people had even designated the woman within the ‘Awakening From the Dream’ as the goddess of their dreams.

But at this moment, their ‘goddess of their dreams’ suddenly appeared before them at this engagement ceremony.

## Captured

The main hall of the Debs clan was in an uproar.

“This... this...”

Many nobles were absolutely stunned upon seeing Alice. Linley’s extremely high level of sculpting abilities, unfortunately, was to blame for them to so easily be able to recognize Alice as the inspiration for ‘Awakening From the Dream’.

Linley had already surpassed the level of ‘skill’; through his sculpture, he totally was able to bring out this woman’s charm and mesmerizing qualities. All of these nobles, at the very first glance, were able to be absolutely certain that Alice was the ‘goddess’ of their dreams.

Many nobles looked at Alice, then turned to stare at Linley.

Silence!

All of a sudden, the entire main hall became deafeningly quiet, as though all of the nobles present suddenly understood something, while also understanding that now was not the time to discuss this.

But this silence... made Alice all the more embarrassed and frantic.

From the corner of her eyes, Alice glanced at Linley. Linley, who was standing right next to the king of Fenlai. Still as calm as ever. He was just quietly looking at her.

Towards Linley...

Alice’s emotions towards him were very complex. There was regret. There was hatred. Hatred for the fact that Linley’s sculpture had prevented her from being the principal wife, and also for making her feel so embarrassed now. But at the same time, that sculpture... had also let her truly understand how Linley had felt towards her.

Kalan felt extremely awkward as well.

“Everyone, let me make the introductions.” Bernard’s voice rang out, his face all smiles. “My son Kalan is now becoming formally engaged with Miss Rowling and Miss Alice.”

As he spoke, Bernard walked over to Kalan’s side. Pointing at Rowling, he said, “This is Miss Rowling, the principal wife of my son Kalan. And this is Miss Alice.”

Instantly, the main hall became filled with quiet murmurs. Every so often, someone would sneak a furtive look at Linley.

“Everyone, let’s begin the banquet!” Bernard laughed merrily.

All of the nobles in the main hall entered the banquet area. During the banquet, the members of the Debs clan were extremely friendly and warm to everybody. But nonetheless, there were still many nobles who would continue to glance at Alice, then glance at Linley.

Holding a glass of wine, Linley walked over to a secluded corner of the main hall, casually seating himself in a sofa.

“Boss, I can hear so many people chatting about you.” Bebe leapt onto Linley’s legs.

Linley gently sipped the wine in his glass. “Let them talk if they wish to. I’m fine with it. Only... Alice most likely is suffering.”

Nowadays, towards Alice, Linley’s emotions were calm and peaceful.

Only now did he understand what a huge influence this sculpture, ‘Awakening From the Dream’, had upon Alice’s life.

Seated in that corner, Linley quietly watched as Kalan, Alice, and Rowling moved from table to table, meeting with guests. He quietly drank his wine by himself.

“Lord Linley, why are you here drinking wine all by your lonesome?” A beautiful young lady with jade hair and snow white skin walked over, sitting down quite naturally next to Linley while extending her glass of wine towards him.

Linley clinked glasses with her.

“My name is Sasha. Before the banquet began, I had been hoping I would have a chance to chat with you, Lord Linley. But it seemed as though you attracted quite a lot of attention from the girls. I didn’t have a chance at all.” Sasha laughed.

Linley looked at Sasha.

Sasha was very tall and slender, and her laughter was rich and vibrant. Her eyes also held a bewitching, intoxicating gaze. Compared to those young noble ladies, a female like this had a more feminine charm.

“The girls? Can it be that yourself aren’t a girl, Sasha?” Linley asked with engrossed ‘curiosity’.

Sasha took a light sip of wine, then laughed. “A girl? I’ve been married for eight years now. How could I be a girl?”

Linley couldn’t help but be startled.

“However... my husband died on the day of our wedding.” Sasha glanced at Linley as she spoke in a soft voice.

“Uh...” Linley stared at Sasha in astonishment.

Seeing the look on Linley’s face, Sasha couldn’t help but begin to laugh a charming laugh, and then she raised her glass and had another sip of red wine. Smiling, she said to Linley, “Lord Linley. You really... are too cute.”

Linley couldn’t help but laugh as well.

This Sasha really was an interesting person.

“Sasha. What are you doing here?” Duke Patterson walked over with a laugh.

Sasha glanced back at Duke Patterson. Feigning anger, she said, “Lord Duke, I just started chatting with Lord Linley. Fine, fine. Go ahead and have your talk with him.” As she spoke, she winked at Linley, then left.

Duke Patterson stared at Sasha’s departing silhouette for a moment before sitting down next to Linley.

“Linley, what do you think?” Duke Patterson said to Linley.

“What do I think about what?”



“Sasha, of course.” Duke Patterson looked at Linley suggestively. “Linley, amongst the circle of nobles, Sasha is a beautiful lady who is chased after by many. Look at Sasha’s figure, her eyes, her little mouth. Oh...”

Linley could only laugh.

“Let me tell you, Sasha should be very interested in you. If you seize this opportunity, you should be able to get her into your hands.” Patterson patted Linley on the shoulders.

Linley glanced at Patterson. “Not interested.”

Patterson stared at Linley in surprise.

“Linley.” Patterson lowered his voice as he spoke to Linley. “Tonight, after this banquet is over, don’t leave in a rush. There’s something I wish to discuss with you.”

Linley was startled.

As secretive as that?

“You wouldn’t not give me face, right?” Patterson feigned anger.

Linley glanced at Patterson, musing to himself, “I want to see what you are up to.” Linley rather wanted the chance to get a bit... closer... to Patterson as well.

“Lord Duke, don’t worry. Tonight, I will wait a while for you.” Linley smiled as he replied.

Eight o’clock that night. Many of the nobles had already left, but Linley was in no hurry. He still remembered his appointment with Patterson.

“I want to see what you are up to.”

Linley waited quietly in the main hall.

“Linley, I’ll leave now,” Clayde said to Linley as he left. The people in the main hall grew fewer and fewer. Getting rather impatient, Linley left the main hall, stepping onto the outside balcony to enjoy the cool night wind.

Right at this moment, a manservant quietly walked up to him.

“Lord Linley. The Lord Duke is inviting you for a walk,” the manservant said quietly.

“As secretive as this?” Linley was a bit surprised.

“Lead the way.” On the surface, Linley looked calm. Bebe remained curled up inside Linley’s robes. The manservant led Linley to a very dark, secluded alley. Judging from the appearance of the road, this was a place where people rarely came.

“Where are we going?” Linley said in a low voice.

The manservant said respectfully, “Lord Linley, this is in accordance with the Lord Duke’s instructions. No one is to see you, Lord Linley.”

“Oh?”

Linley furrowed his brows. But Linley wasn’t afraid. He continued to follow the servant forward, as the two of them made their way through the dark, secluded alley, then passed through a small copse of trees. A secret door was opened, and they arrived at a small building.

“So the Debs clan has a place as secretive as this,” Linley said to himself.

Unless someone was capable of flight, it would be quite difficult indeed to spot this hidden little building.

The manservant led Linley directly into the main hall.

“Lord Duke, Lord Linley is here,” the manservant called out respectfully as they reached the main hall’s doorway.

“Haha, Linley is here?” Dressed in a long black robe, Duke Patterson stepped out of the main hall. Seeing Linley, a gleam of excitement appeared in Duke Patterson’s hawk-like eyes, and he hurriedly walked over. “Linley, come in, quick.”

The manservant respectfully said, “Lord Duke, I’ll be leaving then.”

“Yes, you can go,” Patterson said casually.

The manservant respectfully bowed and turned to leave. But then, the smiling Duke Patterson suddenly shot out his right arm at high speed, viciously piercing through the manservant like a knife, from his back to his chest.

“Ah!” The manservant disbelievingly turned his head and stared at Duke

Patterson. He totally couldn't understand why the powerful Duke Patterson would stoop to killing someone like him!

Unfortunately, with his heart totally shattered, in just a few seconds, the light fled from his eyes.

"Lord Duke, the meaning of this is...?" Linley, off to the side, still managed to maintain his calm.

Duke Patterson was a warrior of the seventh rank. For him to kill a manservant who was at most a warrior of the first or second rank was indeed very easy.

From within his clothes, Duke Patterson drew out a handkerchief, using it to wipe off the blood from his hand. And then, he casually tossed it on the ground.

"Linley. It's nothing. I just didn't want anyone to know that you and I met." Duke Patterson chortled.

Linley looked suspiciously at Duke Patterson. "You don't want anyone to know?"

Duke Patterson nodded confidently. "Don't worry at all. This secret meeting place was arranged by Bernard per my instructions. Bernard only knows that I'll use this place, but he doesn't know who I meet with. The only servant who knows that we have met is dead now. Thus, no one will know that we have met."

Linley made up his mind. He stepped into the main hall.

"Duke Patterson. This matter seems to be quite important." Linley smiled at Duke Patterson.

Patterson nodded. "Of course. And, I have arranged for a decoy as well. In the eyes of others, I have returned to my estate long ago. Aside from Bernard and my housekeeper, I'm afraid you are the only one who knows I am here."

"A decoy?"

"Duke Patterson, what exactly do you intend to do, for you to meet with me here so secretively?" Linley asked with some curiosity.

Duke Patterson looked around the area, then closed the door to the main

hall.

“Come. Let’s chat inside.” Pulling Linley by the hand, Duke Patterson headed for a room within the main hall. After entering the room, Duke Patterson activated a mechanism. With a grinding sound, the stone wall began to move, revealing a stone passageway.

So within this secret little building, there was a secret underground room as well.

“Linley. Come in.” Patterson smiled at Linley.

Linley nodded and stepped inside.

The inside of the underground room was pitch dark. Patterson lit three candles, then turned to smile at Linley.

“There’s nothing for it. Neither my Duke’s manor nor your own manor is suitable. There are too many spies in both places. It’s not safe.” Duke Patterson let out a long breath.

Linley also knew that his manor was under constant surveillance from the Radiant Church as well as Clayde.

Because this manor was gifted to him by Clayde. The servants belonged to Clayde as well. It was quite normal for the place to be filled with Clayde’s spies. At the same time, his guard corps belonged to the Radiant Church. Frankly speaking, Linley’s actions within his manor was under the constant, watchful eye of these two parties.

“Duke Patterson. Today, the topic of our conversation seems to be quite important. Go ahead, tell me what this is all about.” Linley smiled.

Patterson withdrew a magicrystal card from his clothes. “Linley. There are ten million gold coins in this card.”

“Ten million gold coins?” Linley waited for Patterson’s explanation.

Patterson said helplessly, “Linley, I’ll tell you the truth. After my elder brother tasked me with the position of Minister of Finance for the kingdom, I have used my authority to accumulate wealth for myself. Up until now, my activities have been hidden perfectly, but this time, the smuggling activity I engaged in with

another clan was simply too large-scale. Based on what my sources tell me, my elder brother... may have already found out.”

Patterson was still holding back, as he did not reveal that the clan in question was the Debs clan.

“The smuggling was on too large a scale? But does this have anything to do with me?” Linley laughed as he looked at Patterson.

Patterson hurriedly said, “Of course this has something to do with you. Although I am King Clayde’s younger brother, I know very well that when he makes his move, he never shows any mercy at all. I must find a path of retreat. After all, over the course of all these years, I have done too many things. Once this affair comes to light, many other affairs will be dug up as well.”

“Thus... I want you to speak on my behalf with young master Yale of the Dawson Conglomerate. I know that you are good friends with Yale.” A hint of a smile appeared on Patterson’s face.

“Yale?” Linley began to understand Patterson’s intentions.

Patterson said helplessly, “In the future, when these events come to pass, there are not many local powers capable of rescuing me from Fenlai City. But the Dawson Conglomerate is definitely one of them. The Kingdom of Fenlai does not dare to offend the Dawson Conglomerate! At the same time, the Radiant Church will not go to loggerheads against the Dawson Conglomerate for the sake of a minor corruption scandal.”

“As long as the Dawson Conglomerate is willing to act, they can easily rescue me. However, I spoke with the Dawson Conglomerate, and they were not willing to offend King Clayde on my behalf.” Patterson looked hopefully at Linley.

“Linley, Yale is the son of the Chairman of the Dawson Conglomerate. His words are extremely influential. What’s more, the Dawson Conglomerate values you quite highly as well. As long as you are willing to help me, there definitely won’t be any problems,” Duke Patterson begged. “If you don’t help me, I most likely am going to die. I beg of you, please help. No one will know that you and I have spoken.”

“As long as you are willing to save me, these ten million gold coins are yours, Linley. I beg you.” Patterson’s words were very sincere. His eyes were filled with hope!

Linley laughed.

“No one will know?” Linley’s smile was incandescent.

“Right. No one will know.” Patterson hurriedly nodded. A look of joy had already appeared in his eyes.

Suddenly, Linley’s body began to transform at a high speed. Black draconic scales began to come out of his body, while a single black horn sprouted out of his forehead. His two hands transformed into draconic claws. His pupils also transformed from their original color to the dark, golden color of the Armored Razorback Wurm.

“You...” Duke Patterson’s face changed. Knowing that something was wrong, he hurriedly roused his own battle-qi, and all of the muscles of his body began to tighten.

“Whoosh!”

Linley’s iron-whip-like tail slashed through the air with a terrifying howl. Given Duke Patterson’s reaction time and speed, he was unable to avoid it, and it landed a vicious blow on his body.

“WHACK!”

Patterson, warrior of the seventh rank, was sent flying. Blood splattered everywhere.

But then in the next instant, that whip-like tail wrapped around Patterson. The sounds of bones clattering could be heard as Patterson’s entire body was bound tightly, preventing him from moving in the slightest. Patterson struggled as much as he could, but his arms were unable to break free from his bonds.

Linley controlled his draconic tail to pull Patterson towards himself.

Linley was now under full Dragonform. His cold, merciless, dark golden eyes stared death directly into Patterson’s eyes. A hint of a cruel smile played about the corners of Linley’s lips. “You say... no one will know? Haha. That’s just

perfect. I've waited so very long for this opportunity."

"You... you..." Patterson had been absolutely scared stupid by this sudden development.

## The Man Behind the Curtain

His entire body was covered in black scales, while sharp black spikes jutted out from his elbows and his knees. His entire back was lined with a row of sharp spikes coming from his spine. And his eyes had turned a dark golden color. Just seeing that cold, dark, golden set of eyes staring at him was enough to terrify Duke Patterson.

“Who are... who are you?” Duke Patterson was so terrified that his face was ashen white. His mouth flapped for a long while before he managed to say these words.

What was this monstrosity in front of him?

“Who am I?” Linley’s cold gaze was fixed on Patterson.

“Squeak, squeak.” The sounds of bones chattering emanated from throughout Patterson’s body, as Linley continued to apply force through his iron-whip-like tail in constricting Patterson. No matter how hard Patterson struggled, he couldn’t budge at all.

Pain began to spread from his arms to the rest of his body.

“You are from another plane?” Patterson’s eyes were filled with terror. From what he could tell, based on Linley’s current appearance, only a different species from another plane could do what Linley had just done. “Linley, I beg you, spare me, spare my life. I definitely will keep your secret, definitely.”

Transfixed by Linley’s dark golden gaze, Patterson had totally lost his equanimity.

“Spare your life?” A hint of a cold smile appeared on Linley’s face. “That’s not impossible. I want to ask you something. Around twelve or thirteen years ago, did you send some people out to kidnap a woman.”

Patterson was startled.



He immediately frantically tried to recollect the affairs of twelve or thirteen years past, but twelve or thirteen years was an extremely long period of time. Most importantly... “Linley, no, Lord Linley, I... I can’t remember,” Patterson said frantically.

“That was a long time ago, and I often would have women I took a fancy to captured and brought to my mansion. I don’t know exactly which one you are talking about.”

That murderous intent in Linley’s heart began to grow.

This Patterson actually often abducted women?

From Linley’s face, Patterson had no idea as to the transformation that was currently occurring in Linley’s heart. Having completely undergone the Dragonform, Linley appeared totally cold and emotionless, terrifying sinister.

“A woman who had just given birth not long beforehand, who had just finished a pilgrimage to the Radiant Temple, and then returned to her hotel.” Linley still stared icily at Patterson. His voice didn’t rise at all.

Hearing Linley say these things, Patterson’s entire body went stiff. And then he stared at Linley in astonishment.

“You remember now?” Linley said coldly.

Of course Patterson remembered now. Throughout all these years, he had only abducted women who had just given birth on two occasions. His memories of those affairs was quite keen. Especially that one time, thirteen years ago. That time, the person whom had instructed him to act had severely warned him to maintain secrecy.

“I really can’t remember,” Patterson said, terrified. “Lord Linley, I beg you, spare me. I really don’t know. You must be mistaken.”

Linley’s dark golden eyes flashed.

“You want to die?” Linley’s voice grew even colder.

“Ahhhh!” Patterson’s screamed in terror as Linley’s tail increased the pressure around him. This greater pressure was causing all of the bones in Patterson’s body to moan in protest.

“Clatter. Clatter.” The sound of bones nearly cracking was enough to make one’s heart shudder.

But Linley still only stared coldly at Patterson.

“Crunch!”

“Ahhhhh!”

The crisp sound of a bone snapping, mixed with the tortured screams of Patterson. His left arm bone had actually been snapped clean by this terrifying pressure.

“Not bad.” Linley’s lips quivered slightly. As though he were smiling.

But Patterson didn’t view it as a smile. Under the Dragonform, the slight curve of Linley’s lips only filled Patterson’s with even more fear.

“You know what matters and what doesn’t. The vast majority of your battle-qi has been used to protect your vital organs. Only a small amount of battle-qi was used to protect your arm. It’s true. A broken arm isn’t a life-threatening condition. But if your organs were to rupture, then you really will lose your life.” Linley’s voice was very calm.

Patterson felt his throat go dry.

He had never imagined that Linley would have such a terrifying side.

“Now, do you remember yet?” Linley asked again.

Patterson really wanted to answer him, but when he thought about the punishment which would await him if he spoke, he couldn’t help but shudder. His face growing still more pitiful, he cried out miserably, “Lord Linley, I beg of you, don’t torture me. I really don’t know. Even if you kill me, I still don’t know.”

Patterson firmly believed that, with this affair having been over thirteen years ago and Linley being so young, there was no way Linley could be certain about what had happened.

Most likely, Linley had received some sketchy details and was not absolutely certain. As long as he clenched his teeth and refused to speak, perhaps Linley would believe him in the end.

“Lord Linley, if I knew, I would’ve told you long ago, and avoided all this suffering. Lord Linley, I beg of you, please investigate this matter clearly.” Tears began to pour out of Patterson’s eyes, and his face was a picture of sincerity. If it weren’t for the fact that Linley had read that letter from his father, he might really have hesitated.

Staring at Patterson, Linley’s lips began to curve upwards even more.

Patterson’s heart felt a sudden chill.

“Good. Wonderful.” Linley’s tail was still wrapped around Patterson. Suddenly, the draconic tail sent Patterson smashing directly, viciously into the stone floor. Fortunately, though, Linley smashed Patterson feet-first, rather than head-first.

Linley gave full reign to the power of his draconic tail!

Patterson’s two legs smashed against the stone floor.

“Crush!”

The sound of bones splintering instantly, mixed with Patterson’s terrifying, high-pitched howls of agony.

On Patterson’s left knee, the shattered white bone was visible to the eye, piercing both through his leg and his pants. His right leg, even worse off, simply lay limply on the ground, while blood stained his pants around the ankles in particular.

“Ahhh! Ahhhh! Ahhhh!” Patterson was screaming nonstop.

This level of pain was killing him. Fortunately, though, his organs had been protected by his battle-qi, and so his life was not yet in danger.

“Demon. Demon.” Patterson was cursing nonstop in his heart. He knew what a tremendous force Linley was using. Based on his strength as a warrior of the seventh rank, he was only just barely able to protect his internal organs with his battle-qi, and couldn’t protect the rest of his body.

Patterson didn’t want to die.

Crippled legs?

Not a problem. With enough money, he definitely could invite an Arch Magus of the ninth-rank of the Radiant Church to use the 'Song of Life' on him. As long as he didn't already die, any wound, no matter how serious, could be healed!

"Do you remember yet? That woman you abducted?" Linley's voice was still very calm, not rising in the slightest.

But the terror in Patterson's heart was growing.

"I remember. I remember." Beads of sweat were flowing down Patterson's face. Not from pain. From fear.

Patterson knew very well that in this sealed underground room in which he and Linley were currently in, nobody outside could hear anything, no matter how loud the screams. Perhaps someone directly outside, leaning against the stone door, could just barely hear something.

But who would be outside of this secret little room, pressing their ears against the stone door?

No matter how loud he screamed, no one would know.

"If you said so earlier, wouldn't you have suffered less?" Linley's dark golden eyes stared peacefully at Patterson. "Speak, then. Explain what happened to me."

Patterson hurriedly nodded. "Lord Linley, that year, that woman was extremely beautiful. I was bewitched, and hatched an evil plot to abduct that woman and bring her back to my place. I wanted that woman to sleep with me, but she was too headstrong. She committed suicide by ramming her head against the stone wall."

Stuttering as he spoke, Patterson looked at Linley.

In Patterson's opinion, there were very few people who knew what had really happened to that woman. Linley shouldn't have had any clue.

"You continue to lie!!!"

Linley finally grew angry. Those dark golden eyes seemed to slowly turn red. Using his draconic tail, Linley brought Patterson directly before him. Linley all but pressed his face directly against Patterson's, coldly staring into his eyes.

Pressed against Linley, seeing Linley's black scales and the black horn on his forehead, Patterson grew even more terrified.

"I'm not lying! I'm not lying!" Patterson hurriedly said.

Linley's hands, already transformed into claws by the Dragonform, suddenly delivered a mighty slap to Patterson's face.

"THWACK!" Five pieces of flesh were ripped from Patterson's face, and blood began to flow out in a steady stream. Fortunately, Linley wasn't trying to kill him. Otherwise, he would've crushed Patterson's brain to a pulp with this blow.

"Sob... sob... sob..." Patterson was in so much pain that his voice changed.

Linley stared coldly at Patterson. "Patterson, listen closely. I already know very much about what had happened, which is why it's best for you not to lie to me. Otherwise, the torment you will suffer definitely will not be limited to just this. Let me tell you this. The woman that you abducted was my mother!"

"Mother?" Patterson was stunned, even forgetting his pain for the moment.

"I am very clear about what happened that day with my mother, and I have been investigating this entire time. Thus, it's best if you tell me everything about what happened to my mother. Otherwise... you will definitely die." Linley's voice grew even more freezing.

Actually, no matter what Patterson said, he was still definitely going to die.

Because Linley's father had been pursued and heavily injured by Patterson's men, and had died as a result. Patterson didn't yet know that the person he had sent people out to hunt and kill was Linley's father. If he had known... perhaps Patterson would be reacting in a totally different way.

"Tell me. Who did you give my mother to?" Linley stared at Patterson.

"You knew?" Patterson's face turned pale.

Linley actually knew that he had given the woman away to someone else?

"Tell me his name, but you'd best not lie to me. If I discover that you have lied to me, I will make your life worse than death." Linley's voice was very calm again, not rising in the slightest.

Patterson hesitated for a moment.

“There’s no use for me to tell you. You can’t kill him,” Patterson said in a low voice.

“Can’t kill him?” Linley stared coldly at Patterson. “Patterson, listen to me. All you have to do is tell me who that person is. As for whether or not I can kill him, that’s none of your concern. Do you think you know what my real level of ability is?”

Hearing these words, Patterson secretly agreed.

The ‘Linley’ in front of him was too terrifying. The power he had previously displayed had already made others believe he was an absolute genius. But apparently, Linley’s real power was far greater than that of a warrior of the seventh rank. In front of Linley, he didn’t have the slightest ability to resist.

Patterson began to furiously calculate in his mind.

Linley didn’t rush him, only fixing Patterson with his dark golden gaze.

After pondering a long time, Patterson gritted his teeth and looked at Linley. “Linley, I’ll tell you who he is, but you have to guarantee that you definitely won’t let anyone know that I was the one who told you! And, you have to promise you won’t kill me.”

Linley’s face was still as cold as ever. “Fine. I guarantee that I will not tell anyone that you were the one to tell me. And, I guarantee I will not kill you.”

Only now did Patterson secretly let out his breath.

“About twelve years ago, on one occasion, we members of the royal clan of Fenlai went to pay a visit to the Radiant Temple. Within the Radiant Temple, we saw your mother. Afterwards, I sent people to abduct your mother,” Patterson immediately said, “But that wasn’t actually my own intent. I was obeying the orders of another.”

“Who?” Linley asked.

Patterson glanced at Linley. He slowly said, “The orders came from my elder brother. The current ruler of the Kingdom of Fenlai. King Clayde.”

“Clayde?” Linley was startled.

The pride of the Kingdom of Fenlai, the 'Golden Lion', Clayde? The warrior of the ninth rank, Clayde?

"Yes. It was Clayde," Patterson said with certainty. "But I know that Clayde valued your mother highly. He even told me that no matter what, I couldn't let this information out, as if I did, I would definitely die."

Linley looked at Patterson.

"He should be telling the truth," Doehring Cowart's voice rang out in Linley's mind. "I can sense the vibrations of his soul."

Linley made up his mind.

Patterson looked beseechingly at Linley. "Linley, can you spare my life? I guarantee that I definitely won't say a single word about what happened today to anyone." Patterson's eyes were filled with hope.

"Fine. I'll keep my promise." Linley's draconic tail loosened.

Patterson's body dropped to the floor. A look of wild joy appeared on Patterson's face, and he looked at Linley with eyes filled with gratitude.

Right at this moment, a black blur flashed by.

"Crunch."

The little Shadowmouse, Bebe, bit Patterson's neck. Patterson stared with terror at Bebe. He had just escaped from death's door, but now, he could already seem to feel the call of the Netherworld. Patterson could tell that the little Shadowmouse was the one which was always on Linley's shoulders.

Disbelievingly, Patterson stared at Linley.

"I said I wouldn't kill you. But I never said my magical beast wouldn't kill you." Linley looked coldly at Patterson, whose throat was spurting out blood. "Let me tell you something else as well. Several months ago, there was a man who snuck into your Duke's mansion. Afterwards, you sent people after him to kill him. And that man... was my father!"

## The Investigation

Just before his death, Patterson finally understood.

He had, after all, participated in Linley's father's funeral. He knew that Linley's father was already dead.

The funny thing was, just now, he had been hoping that he could leave with his life. But now, he completely understood why Linley had done what he had done. Deep in Patterson's heart, he was unwilling to be resigned to dying like this. Based on his prowess as a warrior of the seventh rank, it wouldn't be too hard to live for another two or three hundred years.

His life should still be long.

"I'm dying, but Clayde, your life won't be much better." As Patterson's soul was drawn to the Netherworld, it contained a thread of hatred, hatred for his brother Clayde.



\*

After watching Patterson die, Linley returned to his normal form.

"Clayde. So the man behind this event was Clayde." Linley frowned deeply.

Clayde himself was a combatant of the ninth rank. Even if Linley was in full Dragonform, he would be at most an early eighth rank combatant.

Clayde was on a totally different level compared to him. Even if Linley were to ambush him, he simply could not harm a warrior of the ninth rank. The gap between them was too great.

And Clayde had tremendous power at his disposal as well.

As the revered ruler of Fenlai, how could he not have many fighters under his



banner? And, having been the ruler for many years of the Kingdom of Fenlai, the leading kingdom amongst the six kingdoms of the Holy Union, he had a very close relationship with the Radiant Church. His roots were extremely deep.

In terms of both strength as well as forces available, Linley could not compare to Clayde.

“Perhaps my only advantage right now is that I am operating hidden in the shadows.” Linley constantly pondered how to deal with Clayde.

Doehring Cowart appeared from within the Coiling Dragon ring. He immediately urged Linley, “Linley, don’t waste any more time here. What you need to do right now is to destroy anything that might reveal you were here. Get back to your own estate immediately, otherwise, if you return too late, when they begin investigating who killed Patterson, they might suspect you.”

Linley was startled awake.

Right!

His only advantage was that he was operating from within the shadows. No matter what, he couldn’t allow Clayde to be on guard against him.

“Time to burn the evidence to ashes.” Linley immediately generated several dozen fireballs which surrounded Patterson’s body. Based on his current spiritual energy, the temperature of his fireballs was quite high.

Patterson’s body quickly began to burn, while at the same time, an extremely foul odor began to fill the air. After a while, only a few charred yellow bones and ashes remained.

That foul odor made Linley frown.

“Linley, your clothes,” Doehring Cowart reminded.

Linley looked down at his clothes. Indeed. After having gone through the Dragonform transformation, his clothes had been totally ripped apart. Linley retrieved his things, and then removed his outer jacket and pants without the slightest hesitation. Instantly, he burnt his clothes to ashes as well.

Linley immediately activated the mechanism.

“Rumble rumble.” The stone door once more opened, and Linley hurriedly

walked out, then closed the door again.

No matter what, it was best for the stone door to be closed. Otherwise, with the door open, that smell of burnt flesh would quickly draw people's attention.

"There should be clothes within this room." Linley glanced down at his underwear. Clearly, he couldn't walk out just in his ruined underwear like this. That would definitely arouse suspicion. Linley immediately went to another room on the side, opening up a dresser.

The dresser was filled with sets of clothes.

Linley selected a set of black clothes, rather similar to the outfit he had worn to the engagement ceremony. Putting the clothes on, Linley then once more used his wind spells to blow away the nearby specks of blood as well as that foul odor of burning flesh.

"Best to go back early. Can't let anyone notice anything." Moving at high speed, Linley leapt straight through the courtyard, arriving at the front courtyard in a matter of minutes.

At this point in time, there were still a few nobles remaining, engaging in idle conversation.

"Oh, Lord Linley. You haven't left yet?" Count Juneau was heading out as well. Seeing Linley not too far away, he warmly greeted Linley.

Linley smiled. "Right. Just then, my stomach felt a bit queasy, so I went to the privy."

Count Juneau walked out shoulder-to-shoulder with Linley.

"Lord Linley, I must say that I am a big fan of your sculptures. I was the one who bought the first three sculptures that you exhibited at the main hall of the Proulx Gallery," Count Juneau said proudly to Linley. The thing which Count Juneau was proudest of was most likely the fact that he had been the one to purchase the first three sculptures which Linley had put on display.

Those three sculptures of Linley's, just judging from the outside, was perhaps only worth six or seven thousand gold coins.

However... Linley's status was now very different. He was the master sculptor

who had carved 'Awakening From the Dream'. In terms of status, he wasn't too much off from the levels of Proulx and Hope Jensen. How could the price of the very first three sculptures of a person such as him be exhibited this low?

Based on his calculations and the implicit value, these three sculptures which Count Juneau had collected were most likely each worth at least a hundred thousand gold coins!

This was perhaps the collection which Count Juneau was the most delighted over, ever. Count Juneau had decided that these three items needed to be kept in his collection. He believed... as Linley's future accomplishments became greater and greater, the value of these three sculptures would rise as well.

"Lord Linley, have a safe trip," the housekeeper for the Debs clan said respectfully at the gate for the Deb's clan's manor.

Linley nodded. Bidding farewell to Count Juneau, he entered his own carriage.

"Go back." Linley gave a calm command upon entering the carriage.

"Yes, milord."

The Radiant Church warrior of the seventh rank who served as a driver bowed in acknowledgment, then immediately began driving the carriage towards Linley's manor.

"I probably spent around fifteen minutes or so with Patterson." Linley took out his pocket watch and took a glance.

This was one of the gifts that the many well-wishers of his had sent him upon him being conferred the rank of Marquis.

"Fifteen minutes or so. Count Juneau and the rest were amongst the last pack of guests to leave. If they don't investigate extremely carefully, it shouldn't be possible for them to suspect me," Linley said to himself. "The other problem is, Patterson said that his housekeeper knew that he was going to meet with someone, but not exactly who."

Linley frowned. "But I can't totally trust his words. Perhaps his housekeeper did in fact know he was going to meet me, but Patterson wanted me to relax and trust him and thus claimed no one else knew."

Linley had considered this possibility.

Patterson's housekeeper!

This definitely was a flaw.

What's more... if there really was an investigation, people might discover that Linley had disappeared for fifteen minutes at the end. But during that period of time, all the nobles were engaged in casual conversation and were leaving haphazardly. It would most likely be extremely difficult to clearly investigate a single person, given those circumstances.

"At least no one personally witnessed my meeting with Patterson. The one attendant who did see was killed by Patterson," Linley said to himself.

At most, others might suspect him. But there was no actionable evidence against him.

"Boss, what are you thinking about?" Bebe was lying on Linley's legs. Raising his little head, he looked at Linley.

"Nothing." Linley rubbed Bebe's little head, having totally calmed down.

"Milord, we have arrived."

Linley pushed open the carriage curtains, then raised his head and stared up at the boundless sky. Right now, the night sky was filled with stars. Linley couldn't help but feel a carefree joy in his heart, while at the same time, his resolve to kill Clayde grew still more firm. "Patterson died today. Next one up is Clayde."

Patterson had disappeared for a day or two. Aside from Patterson's housekeeper, no one noticed that something was amiss.

Within the Debs clan's manor, there was only Bernard and a jade-haired middle-aged person.

"Bernard, on the night of Kalan's engagement, did the Lord Duke depart from your manor?" The jade-haired middle-aged man asked. This man was Duke Patterson's housekeeper, named Lodi.

Bernard was forced to hold in his aggrieved feelings and refrain from saying, "Your Duke disappeared, and you are asking ME about it?" That night,

Patterson hadn't even told Bernard whom he was going to meet, nor did he say a word when he left. How would he, Bernard, know anything?

"The Lord Duke left. The Lord Duke is not in my manor," Bernard replied directly.

The very day after the engagement ceremony, Bernard had sent someone over to dispose of the servant's corpse. His servants didn't find any trace of Patterson within that small building.

"Oh." Lodi frowned, then stared at Bernard. "Bernard, if you find any trace of my Duke, you must let me know immediately. This affair might be minor, or it might be major. If it becomes a major affair, even the smuggling affairs of your Debs clan might come to light."

Bernard's face changed.

"Alright, I'll go back now." Lodi left with a heavy mind.

Seeing Lodi's departing back, Bernard felt somewhat unsettled, and made the decision to immediately go visit that building which Patterson had used.

Within that secretive building inside the Debs clan's estate.

Bernard had entered alone. The corpse of that dead servant had long since been removed and disposed of by the people Bernard had sent. Looking at the building, Bernard frowned. "Duke Patterson said he was going to meet with a guest, but in the end, he didn't return home. Could it be..."

Bernard suddenly thought of one possibility.

Very few people even in the Debs clan knew about the secret underground room. Naturally, those people he had sent to dispose of the corpse wouldn't know either, nor would they go investigate.

But Bernard had told Duke Patterson of the secret underground room. He had also told the Duke that there was definitely no one who could eavesdrop on any conversations within.

"Impossible. There's no way something like that could've happened." Bernard hurriedly ran into the main hall, then directly went to the mechanism and activated it.

“Rumble, rumble.”

That wall-like ‘stone door’ slowly opened, while at the same time, a foul, bloody odor that smelt like burnt flesh wafted out.

The look on Bernard’s face grew ugly.

Hurriedly walking into the secret room, he saw that on the granite floor, there were still traces of blood and scratches. To the side, there was a pile of charred human bones as well as ashes.

“Someone died here.” Bernard was absolutely certain.

And then, the person who died had been burnt to ashes. But there was no way for Bernard to tell who it was for certain.

“Ring!” Bernard suddenly saw within the pile of ashes a dirty, grayish-silver ring. Upon seeing the ring, Bernard felt that it looked extremely similar to the ring which Duke Patterson liked to wear.

Instantly, all the blood fled from Bernard’s face.

“Patterson is most likely dead.” Bernard’s thoughts were a chaotic mess.

The Debs clan had spent over half of their capital and a large amount of manpower in order to carry out this water jade smuggling operation with Duke Patterson’s help. This was an extremely important business operation for the Debs clan. But if the smuggling became exposed... it wouldn’t just be a problem of losing money. Most likely, the entire Debs clan would be exterminated by the furious King Clayde!

The entire Debs clan... was quite possibly finished.

“No, not possible. Duke Patterson was a warrior of the seventh rank. How could he die so easily? Given his careful personality, there is no way that he would meet in private with someone who was more powerful than him.” Bernard couldn’t accept what he was seeing.

It was true. Patterson was an extremely cautious man. Sadly, Patterson didn’t have an accurate understanding of Linley’s power.



\*

The entire City of Fenlai was peaceful. Linley continued to train quietly at his manor every day. But then, after Duke Patterson had disappeared for half a month, the previously calm and sedate King Clayde finally began to issue orders. The first step was to capture the Duke's housekeeper, Lodi. The next was to investigate the Duke's whereabouts on a wide scale.

Within the main hall of Linley's manor.

"Lord Linley, per his Majesty's decree, he would like Lord Linley to pay a visit to the palace."

Staring at the royal decree brought by the palace attendant, Linley felt a bit unsettled. Why was King Clayde summoning him?

"Please wait a moment. Allow me to change my clothes, and I'll head to the palace immediately afterwards." Linley smiled as he replied.

## Secrets Exposed

The night was pitch-dark.

The sound of the carriage could be heard on the quiet road leading to the palace. Linley was sitting alone in the carriage, with Bebe on his legs. Next to the carriage, there were over ten knights on fine stallions, and leading them was the palace servant who had come.

Within the carriage.

Linley was frowning as he considered. "It's quite late already. But King Clayde suddenly summoned me to his palace. What is this about?" As the saying goes, only those who were blameless would always be relaxed.

Linley had just killed Patterson, and now he was very much aware that in the past, it was Clayde who had instructed Patterson to send people to abduct his mother. In other words, there was a deep enmity between him and Clayde.

Naturally, Linley was very careful around Clayde.

"I heard two days ago, Clayde seized the housekeeper of the Duke's manor, and has begun a wide scale investigation of Patterson's affairs. Patterson said that he hadn't told anyone about his meeting with me. But can I trust those words?" Linley felt uncertain.

Perhaps that housekeeper already knew about Patterson and Linley's meeting.

If that Duke's housekeeper informed King Clayde of the meeting, then naturally, Linley would be at the precipice of danger.

"Linley, don't worry."

Doehring Cowart's voice rang out in Linley's mind, reassuring him. "Linley, even if that Duke Patterson told his housekeeper that he was meeting with you, you would still be fine."



“Fine?” Linley looked questioningly at Doehring Cowart.

Doehring Cowart nodded confidently. “Naturally. Even if Clayde guessed that you killed Patterson, he still won’t openly address it.”

“Because... Clayde doesn’t know the reason why you killed Patterson.” Doehring Cowart’s face was filled with confidence.

Linley was startled. Even if Clayde didn’t know why he killed Patterson... he still would know Linley was the killer, right?

“It’s simple. Judging from the conversation you had with Patterson in that underground room, his relationship with Clayde wasn’t very good. While he was the Minister of Finance, Patterson engaged in widespread corruption. In his heart, Clayde probably didn’t feel much affection for Patterson. What’s more... Clayde doesn’t know that there is enmity between the two of you. Thus, he won’t act against you without cause. Because if he wishes to punish you, or to kill you, he would have to first get permission from the Radiant Church.” His eyes gleaming, Doehring Cowart looked at Linley.

“Hrmph, can that Clayde really be considered a king? The Radiant Church has the authority to depose him from his rule. But you are someone whom the Radiant Church values highly. Would he dare to casually act against you?” Doehring Cowart consoled Linley.

Linley nodded.

He understood this logic.

However...

Linley truly did not wish for Clayde to be on his guard against him. If Clayde became wary of Linley, how would Linley investigate his mother’s whereabouts or take revenge on behalf of his mother?

“Open the door! It’s me!” The palace attendant shouted in a shrill voice.

Hearing this, Linley immediately knew that they had already reached the palace gates. Like a giant beast, the gates squatted there, hulking. In just half an hour’s time, countless carriages had entered and left the palace.

One of those carriages was Linley’s. Another belonged to Bernard. And still

others were carrying other nobles.

Within the business discussion hall of the palace.

Aside from the two guards standing at the door to the hall, everyone else present in the hall were nobles of high rank. In total, there were eight people present. These were Bernard, leader of the Debs clan. The Prime Court Magus, Linley. The Left Premier, Duke Bonalt. The Inspector General, Hampton...

“Linley, you came.” Bernard greeted him warmly.

All of the nobles already present instantly greeted him as well. Seeing all of these nobles, Linley couldn’t help but suddenly feel calm. It seemed that he had not been specially summoned after all.

“Milords, I wonder if any of you know why his Majesty has summoned us?” Linley immediately asked.

Duke Bonalt, as the Left Premier, knew a great deal of information.

“Most likely, this summons is related to the disappearance of Duke Patterson,” Duke Bonalt replied with a warm laugh.

Bernard, off to the side, immediately asked, “Lord Duke, what does Duke Patterson’s disappearance have to do with me? I don’t have any important responsibilities at court.”

“Today, his Majesty isn’t summoning his entire court, merely investigating a matter. Otherwise, why would I be here, but not the Right Premier, and only a single Inspector General?” Duke Bonalt saw things quite clearly.

Bernard nodded.

But Bernard still felt very uneasy.

Ever since Patterson had disappeared, Bernard had been filled with unease. He feared that the involvement between his Debs clan and Duke Patterson in the water jade smuggling operation would be brought to light. If this affair was revealed, then the Debs clan would really be finished.

“His Majesty has arrived!”

Suddenly, the shrill voice of the palace attendant sounded out. From a side

door to the hall, Clayde walked in, heading directly for a seat in front and sitting down, two palace attendants respectfully at his side.

“All hail his Majesty!”

All of the nobles present bowed and chanted.

Clayde glanced at the nobles. He calmly nodded, then said, “It’s quite late at night already. I originally didn’t wish to disturb all of you, but this issue regarding the disappearance of my second brother, Patterson, is too important. I was forced to summon all of you to come here.”

“Might I ask, your Majesty, what Duke Patterson’s disappearance has to do with your summons for us?” Linley immediately asked.

Of the eight people present before Clayde, perhaps only Linley would dare to speak to him in such a manner. Because while everyone else present was subordinate to Clayde, in reality, Linley was the subordinate of the Radiant Church, and was only a servant of the Kingdom of Fenlai in name.

“Linley, I just wish to clearly investigate this affair.” Clayde smiled, and then said in a loud voice, “Bring out the Duke’s housekeeper, Lodi.”

Lodi? The Duke’s housekeeper?

Both Linley and the Deb clan’s leader Bernard felt their hearts start to pound.

The entire meeting hall was silent. Everyone quietly awaited Lodi being brought forward to testify. Linley still stood there, with the Shadowmouse Bebe on his shoulders.

After a short while...

Under escort by palace guards, a middle-aged man with jade-like hair walked in. This man looked very fragile, with mussed hair and a bewildered look on his face.

Bernard recognized this man at a single glance. This man in front of him was indeed Lodi, the housekeeper for Duke Patterson.

“Lodi, explain everything in detail,” Clayde shouted towards Lodi.

Lodi clearly had already explained once to Clayde already. This explanation

clearly was for the benefit of Linley and the others. Lodi said very honestly, “Your Majesty, on June 18th, when the Debs clan held that engagement ceremony, the Lord Duke also went to attend. But after the ceremony, the Lord Duke never came back.”

“Lodi, stand to one side,” Clayde said coldly.

“Yes, your Majesty.” Lodi clearly was terrified. He hurriedly scurried off into a corner.

Clayde swept the eight nobles with his gaze.

“Based on the information from my investigations, the night of the engagement ceremony at the Debs clan, you all were amongst the last to leave. What I want to ask is, did any of you encounter Duke Patterson?” Clayde’s question was very simple.

“Right after the banquet, Patterson departed,” the Left Premier, Lord Bonalt, said in a loud voice.

Linley nodded as well. “I, too, saw Patterson departing quite early.”

The others either said they didn’t see him, or that Patterson left very early.

Hearing everyone speak, Clayde smiled and nodded, and then turned to Lodi again. “Lodi, continue.”

“Yes,” Lodi continued. “That night, before going to the Debs manor, Duke Patterson told me that he was going to be meeting with an extremely important person, but to the importance of the discussion topic, nobody could know about it. Thus, he ordered me to arrange for a double to impersonate him and leave the manor. In truth, the Lord Duke would remain within the manor.”

“The Lord Duke also said that the Debs clan would arrange for a safe, secret place for his meeting.” Lodi added.

Upon hearing these words, Bernard Debs’ face immediately turned white.

“Your Majesty! Your Majesty!”

Bernard hurriedly said, “This has nothing to do with me. The Lord Duke told me he wanted to meet with someone, so I arranged a meeting room for them. I couldn’t refuse him.”

“Bernard. Don’t be hasty. I won’t wrongly blame someone.” Clayde smiled.

“Thank you, your Majesty.” Bernard quickly stepped back, but his face was still pale.

Clayde turned to look at Linley and the others. “If Patterson was going to meet with someone, the person he was going to meet with should have some status. Who would that person be? I think... it must have been one of the last guests to leave.”

Linley’s heart trembled.

Duke Bonalt, Count Juneau, Marquis Hampton, and the others all stared at Clayde in astonishment. By now, they could guess why the king had called them here.

His Majesty was suspicious of them!

“Your Majesty, I definitely did not meet with him,” Count Juneau, Marquis Hampton, and the others hurriedly said.

Clayde smiled. “I only have my suspicions. If none of you did anything to be guilty of, why be so nervous? Look, Linley’s the calmest one here.”

Linley smiled but didn’t make a sound.

Clayde glanced at this group of people, laughing coldly in his heart. “I couldn’t give a damn about who made Patterson disappear. In fact, I’d rather thank that person for giving me such a wonderful opportunity to eradicate all the secret connections Patterson has built up.”

As the long-time Minister of Finance, Patterson had erected an enormous, dense web of connections. His influence was extremely large. Clayde didn’t dare to casually investigate Patterson either, as he didn’t want to cause too many problems in the kingdom.

This was also the reason why the Debs clan had decided to work alongside Patterson.

But now, Patterson had disappeared. The group of dragons no longer had a leader.

Acting as fast as lightning, Clayde used various ruthless techniques to quickly

clip off Patterson's wings and shatter the web of influence which Patterson had spent so long building up.

Without Patterson's guidance, those collaborators of his naturally would be in for a terrible time if they resisted. There was no way they could resist the pressure exerted by King Clayde.

Clayde looked at Linley and the others. Laughing, he said, "The disappearance of my second brother, Patterson, is something I must look into. But what surprised me was, I ended up discovering quite a few things. Lodi, in particular, spilled many secrets."

Linley couldn't help but look at Lodi.

"Lodi, tell them." Clayde smiled at Lodi.

Right now, Clayde was feeling extremely satisfied. The death of a brother, to Clayde, was no big deal at all. More importantly... all of the power within the Kingdom of Fenlai finally rested with him again.

Lodi respectfully said, "Your Majesty, that day, when Duke Patterson attended the engagement ceremony at the Debs clan, the reason he needed to meet with that mysterious person was that he wanted to start a relationship with the Dawson Conglomerate. Thus... the person he went to see absolutely has to have some sort of connection to the Dawson Conglomerate.

"The Dawson Conglomerate?"

Linley felt his heart shudder violently.

"Does everyone want to know why it was that my second brother wished to start a relationship with the Dawson Conglomerate?" Clayde laughed as he looked at the people present. "Lodi, continue."

"Yes." Lodi clearly had been totally cowed by Clayde, saying whatever he was told to. "Over these years, Duke Patterson had betrayed his country in many ways for his own profit and for his own selfish motives. In these past few months in particular, he initiated a large-scale water-jade smuggling program with the Debs clan. In the entire history of our kingdom, this is the largest water-jade program that has ever existed."

“Smash!”

The leader of the Debs clan, Bernard, immediately knelt down, his knees smashing into the ground. He hurriedly said, “Your Majesty, I am being framed! Our Debs clan has always operated our businesses in an open, aboveboard manner. We’ve never acted in a way which was against the best interests of the kingdom. Our Debs clan is being framed!”

“Framed?” Clayde flicked a cold glance at Bernard.

“Bring in the Lanseer brothers!”

Upon hearing the words ‘Lanseer brothers’, the face of Bernard, clan leader of the Debs clan, lost all blood.

## Imprisoned

For the sake of this water jade smuggling operation, the Debs clan had paid a very high price. Bernard ordered his Third Brother to be responsible for this affair, and the Lanseer brothers were his Third Brother's right and left hand men.

Standing in the middle of the meeting hall, Linley remained calm. The Shadowmouse, Bebe, also quietly stood on Linley's shoulders.

The man and the magical beast both just stood there as though nothing were happening, quietly watching it all. Even though he saw the begging look Bernard had trained on him, Linley didn't react in the slightest.

After a while...

The sound of heavy chains could be heard. Two golden-haired men in shackles entered the meeting hall, under escort from the palace guards. These two men were shackled by the feet and by the hands as well. Just judging from the thickness of those leg-irons, the shackles must have been one or two hundred pounds heavy.

Such heavy shackles were used expressly for collaring those warriors with powerful strength.

"Milord clan leader."

Upon entering the discussion hall and seeing Bernard who was kneeling on the ground, strange smiles appeared on their faces. They actually called out to Bernard respectfully.

Standing to the side, Linley understood.

Most likely these Lanseer brothers were two of the major leaders in the smuggling operation who most likely had some secret connection with the Debs clan.



“The Debs clan is going to be in trouble now.” Linley just quietly watched.

Seeing those two shackled golden-haired men, Bernard reacted with confusion. “Uh? Lanseer and Langmuir, why have the two of you been imprisoned by his Majesty? Didn’t I give the two of you a one hundred thousand gold coins a few months ago and tell you to go enjoy life?”

Those two golden-haired men were briefly startled, then they laughed.

“Milord clan leader, are you jesting?” Lanseer laughed.

Next to him, Langmuir snickered as well. “What, lord clan leader, do you still think that you can lie and hide? Forget it. You might as well admit your guilt.”

A look of rage appeared on Bernard’s face. He suddenly rose to his feet, staring angrily at Lanseer and Langmuir. “Lanseer, Langmuir, my Debs clan has raised you and cultivated you since you were little. The two of you should know very well how I have treated you.”

“It’s true, you have treated us brothers very well. But the two of us have also risked our lives for the Debs clan for many years now,” the elder brother, Lanseer, said coldly.

Bernard’s rage grew. With a trembling hand, he pointed at the Lanseer brothers. “The two of you truly forget favors and violate justice. True, you two have worked on behalf of the Debs clan for many years now, but all these years, you have been acting corruptly so as to gain money that belonged to the clan. After that event half a year ago, considering that the two of you had worked for us for so long, I spared your lives and even gave you one hundred thousand gold coins and told you to go home and enjoy your lives. But... but you... not only are you not grateful, you’ve now participated in smuggling? And after getting caught, you sully the Debs clan?”

Lanseer and Langmuir were totally caught off-guard, and they stared at Bernard in bewilderment.

“We... we were corrupt? You... you gave us one hundred thousand gold coins?” Lanseer and Langmuir were totally flabbergasted.

Bernard’s rage exploding, he suddenly turned and knelt before Clayde. His tears cascading onto the ground, he said, “Your Majesty, these two are nothing

more than a pair of insatiable wolves. When they were young, I saw that they were two pitiable orphans and so I took them in, and later gave them important positions. But they only acted to shovel my clan's wealth into their own pockets. Despite that, considering the many years of affection between us, I spared their lives and even gave them one hundred thousand gold coins. This can be considered to be extremely benevolent and merciful of me. But now? Now they actually come here to sully and frame my Debs clan. They want to destroy the Debs clan! How vicious! Your Majesty, my heart is broken. My heart is broken!"

Seeing the miserable cries of Bernard, many of the nobles in the meeting hall did indeed begin to wonder if Lanseer and Langmuir really were framing the Debs clan.

"Bernard, you... you..." Lanseer and Langmuir were so enraged that their faces turned red, but they weren't able to say a single word.

How much had these two brothers sacrificed for the Debs clan?

They were even willing to engage in smuggling for the clan, precisely because the two of them didn't fear death. If it weren't for the fact that this time, the offer from King Clayde was simply too enticing, they wouldn't have betrayed the Debs clan.

But everything which Bernard was saying now was false!

"Oh? There's an event such as this?" Clayde glanced at Bernard.

Clayde could sense that Bernard had come prepared, as otherwise, he wouldn't have suddenly come up with all these lies. If he were to investigate, most likely he wouldn't be able to find any flaws.

"Hrmph. It's a pity that Third Brother of Bernard's leapt into the river. We weren't even able to find his corpse. Otherwise, with his Third Brother in front of him, Bernard would have nothing to say." Clayde was furious.

Smuggling water jade.

Water jade mines were part of the national wealth of the kingdom. Which was to say, it was part of Clayde's wealth.

Illegally mining and smuggling water jade meant stealing from him, Clayde. Naturally, Clayde would feel furious.

But that Third Brother of Bernard's had leapt into the river to commit suicide, while Bernard had seemingly been prepared for Lanseer and Langmuir's betrayal.

"Bernard, I won't unjustly accuse an innocent man," Clayde said solemnly.

"Thank you, your Majesty! Thank you, your Majesty!" Bernard's face was covered with tears.

But Clayde announced coldly, "However, I also won't forgive a person who has betrayed the interests of his kingdom. Based on the intelligence that I have, it seems that the person responsible for this smuggling operating was your Third Brother."

"My Third Brother?" Bernard stared questioningly at Clayde.

Clayde stared coldly at Bernard. "What, do you have something to say?"

A wounded look on his face, Bernard said, "Of course I do. Your Majesty, I really don't know why you said what you just said, but over a year ago, my Third Brother left the Kingdom of Fenlai and began on a training excursion tour to various other countries. Just a few days ago, he sent a letter back to us."

Clayde's gaze grew colder.

His men had personally reported that when they were in the process of apprehending Bernard's Third Brother that the man, being heavily wounded, had elected to throw himself into the river. They couldn't find any trace of him.

"Your Majesty! Your Majesty! You must deliver justice!"

Bernard cast a furious glare at Lanseer and Langmuir. "You simply cannot believe the lies of these two despicable men and cast aspersions on the heart of a clan which is loyal to the kingdom."

"Bernard, you! You!" The furious and anxious Lanseer brothers didn't know what to say.

Clayde suddenly rose to his feet, staring coldly at Bernard. "I've already said that I will not unjustly accuse an innocent man, nor forgive a man who has

betrayed the interests of his kingdom. Based on the evidence I have at hand, there is at least a suspicion that your Debs clan has betrayed the kingdom. Guards!”

Bernard’s face instantly changed. “Your Majesty! Your Majesty! I am loyal and faithful to the kingdom!”

Two palace guards rushed into the meeting hall.

“Bernard.” Clayde smiled at Bernard.

Bernard raised his head, looking beseechingly at Clayde, as though he were a child looking at his parents.

“Whether or not your clan is loyal is a question that will only be settled by evidence. I will give you a chance. I will not exterminate your clan right away.”

In his heart, Bernard let out a sigh of relief. What he feared the most was that the Debs clan would instantly be exterminated. “Fortunately, I found those ashes and those remains within the secret room. It gave me the chance to prepare.” Ever since that day, Bernard had been preparing. He had in fact made multiple levels of preparations.

“Guards, deliver Bernard as well as the successor to the Debs clan to the Blackwater Jails. As for this case involving the smuggling operations of the Debs clan, let the Right Premier Merritt investigate,” Clayde ordered.

Immediately, those two guards took Bernard away.

“Your Majesty! I believe in your Majesty’s wisdom!” Bernard called to Clayde, even while being dragged away.

That night, the Greenleaf Road became a very energetic place.

Hoof steps and shouts unabated. Hundreds of knights directly surrounded the Debs clan’s manor, terrifying all of the members of the Debs clan present.

“What are you doing? What are you doing? Do you know what place this is?” Kalan’s second granduncle, the second uncle of Bernard, immediately shouted at those palace guards.

The leader of the knights said coldly, “Do you dare to go against the dictates of his Majesty?”

But this second granduncle only raised his head proudly. “The orders of his Majesty? Who knows if you are falsely claiming that you have an order from his Majesty? Speak! What do you want?”

“Second Granduncle, what’s going on outside?”

By now, many of the members of the Debs clan had rushed over.

Even Alice and Rowling had gotten dressed and rushed over. In the Yulan continent, after the engagement ceremony, the fiancée normally would begin to live with the fiancé. But generally speaking, only after the marriage ceremony would the two of them enter their bridal chambers.

Naturally...

There were cases of people sharing a bedroom prior to the wedding as well, as long as both were willing.

“Big sister Alice, what’s going on outside?” Rowling was holding onto Alice’s hands.

Alice was bewildered as well. “I’m not sure.”

The hundreds of people within the Debs clan’s manor all streamed out, and most of them seemed bewildered. Only the core members of the clan who knew the truth about the smuggling operations began to feel frightened.

This smuggling operation of the Debs clan was an extremely large scale one.

Just to carry out the operation, they had used several tens of millions of gold coins. If they were successful, the profits would be several hundred million gold coins. What the Debs clan’s elders thoughts were, once would be enough.

But it seemed this one operation had proved problematic.

“Big brother Kalan, what’s going on?” Rowling asked Kalan as well.

Kalan shook his head, indicating he didn’t know.

The squad of palace knights had assembled outside the manor. Their leader, the knight-captain, upon seeing so many members of the Debs clan present, withdrew the tablet of command from his clothes, shouting in a bright voice, “His Majesty orders that, as the Debs clan is under suspicion of engaging in the

smuggling of water jade, the leader of the Debs clan as well as his successor are to be immediately jailed within the Blackwater Jails.”

Instantly, the faces of every member of the Debs clan changed.

The faces of those core members of the Debs clan turned even more ashen, even paler. But Alice, Rowling, and those other members of the clan only felt astounded and bewildered.

Several guards stepped forward and grabbed Kalan.

“Take him away!”

The leader of the knights shouted.

At this moment, Kalan felt as though his limbs had gone soft. He allowed those guards to march him towards the gate. But once he reached the gate, he suddenly woke up and, turning his head, frantically called out, “Second Granduncle, Alice, you two have to save me, have to save me!”

Allowing Kalan to shout as much as he wanted, those palace guards emotionlessly escorted him off towards the jails.

Alice, Rowling, and the other members of the Debs clan could only watch as Kalan was taken away, unable to help. Their clan was powerful, true, but how could they resist against the king?

By the next morning, the news that the Debs clan was suspected of having engaged in water jade smuggling had spread across the entire noble circle of Fenlai City. Many of the nobles of Fenlai were paying special attention to this matter.

What’s more, this case was being personally handled by the Right Premier of the Kingdom of Fenlai, Duke Merritt.

Within Duke Merritt’s manor.

Lord Duke Merritt was already over seventy years old, but as a fairly powerful warrior, he looked as though he were only in his middle years. His short golden hair was slick and gleamed.

Right now, Duke Merritt was seated on a chair. He casually flicked a glance at his visitor from the Debs clan - the second granduncle of Kalan, Nimitz.

“Lord Merritt, our clan has definitely been unjustly accused. I hope, lord, that you will be just to our clan.”

As he spoke, Nimitz pulled out a book from his side. “Lord Merritt, I know that you love to collect holy scripts. This holy script was issued by the Radiant Church over three thousand years ago. It’s a rather rare one.”

“Oh, a holy script?”

Merritt casually accepted it, but while flipping through it, Merritt suddenly noticed that stuck within the pages, there was a flat card. A flat card produced by the Golden Bank of the Four Empires. A magicrystal card!

A hint of a smile appeared on Merritt’s face.

Nimitz was carefully observing Merritt’s reactions. Merritt closed the holy script, putting it to the side, then smiled. “Nimitz, you should know that aside from holy scripts, I’m also a big fan of sculptures. A while ago, when I saw that ‘Awakening From the Dream’, I liked it very much. During your clan’s engagement ceremony, I saw that Alice. Oh, she looked so very similar to that person in the sculpture. I wonder... if it would be possible for me to have a private chat with Alice.”

## To Be Wronged

Have a private chat with Alice? Whether or not the Debs clan had engaged in the smuggling of water jade, what use would a private chat with Alice be to make that determination? Clearly, this Merritt had other designs. Nimitz was a person with significant worldly experience. Naturally, he knew exactly what was going on.

Nimitz's eyes narrowed as he stared at Merritt.

But Merritt only casually reclined on his chair, even closing his eyes as he relaxed himself. He didn't even look at Nimitz. Merritt's attitude spoke for itself: If you want your family's 'grievance' to be washed clean, then have Alice come talk to me about it.

Nimitz was quiet for a moment, then laughed. "So Lord Merritt is a fan of Master Linley's 'Awakening From the Dream'. It is understandable if you want to have a chat with Alice. Fine, I'll go back and speak with her."

Upon hearing these words, Merritt opened his eyes, smiling at Nimitz. "Haha, then Nimitz, you can go back now. If Alice is willing to have a good chat with me, I think I will have a better understanding of your Debs clan."

Nimitz immediately stood up, bowing modestly. "Then Lord Merritt, I take my leave. I entrust the affairs of our Debs clan with you."

Merritt nodded slightly.

Nimitz immediately departed.

Leaving behind Duke Merritt, alone in that living room.

Toying with his wine cup, Merritt mumbled in a low voice, "My goddess... Alice..." There was a look of satisfaction and anticipation on his face.

As the Right Premier of the Kingdom of Fenlai, and as a Duke, Merritt had an extremely exalted status. The number of people with a higher status than him



in the Kingdom of Fenlai could be counted on one hand.

A person like him had experienced virtually any sort of woman he wished.

Merritt really was a lecher, despite being in his seventies. Warriors of his level could live to be over three hundred. Right now, he was only in his seventies and in the prime of his life. Merritt publicly had twelve wives to his name, but there was a common viewpoint amongst nobles; one's own wives at home weren't as interesting as having lovers outside, but having lovers outside weren't as interesting as those you couldn't get. Those whom you couldn't get were the best of all.

But given Merritt's status, there were very few women he was unable to get. At the same time, there were very few women who could truly move him.

But Alice was definitely one.

Ever since that sculpture, 'Awakening From the Dream' had become famous, in the hearts of many, the woman of the sculpture had become an untouchable, lofty goddess. For someone of Merritt's stature, naturally he would deeply desire to get a goddess like Alice beneath his thighs. But this was really too difficult.

But now? An opportunity had come.

"Alice. The goddess?" Merritt was unable to repress his smile. Turning his head up, he drained all of the red wine from his glass.

Sitting within his carriage on the way home, Nimitz was frowning deeply.

Alice was Kalan's fiancée!

If he were to ask Alice to get meet privately with Merritt, then he definitely would be essentially pushing Alice into a disaster. In the future, when faced with Kalan's questioning, it wouldn't be a big deal. But if word of this were to spread, the impact it would have on the Debs clan's standing would be tremendous.

"Ugh. If the clan is finished, then what will its reputation matter?" Nimitz shook his head, sighing.

Right now, the Debs clan had reached a critical juncture. If the Debs clan was

found to have been guilty of smuggling, then the entire clan would be exterminated, and all of its possessions would be taken by the King of Fenlai. Although the Debs clan had left behind some roots outside the kingdom, preventing it from being totally wiped out, almost all of its possessions were in the Kingdom of Fenlai.

If it was all lost, who knew how many years it would be before the Debs clan would return to its former glory?

Compared to the clan's future, a little bit of mockery and humiliation wasn't a big deal. After all, since when did the circle of nobles lack for embarrassing stories?

"But this has to be of Alice's own free will." Nimitz was a bit worried. "I can't forcibly deliver her to the Right Premier's manor, after all."

Nimitz didn't care at all about Alice's purity. She was just a woman, after all!

But Nimitz knew...

"This Alice has a special relationship with Linley. If I were to force her, and then Linley found out..." Just thinking about it made Nimitz frightened. Linley had a very special status within the Kingdom of Fenlai.

Although he had the rank of Marquis, in actuality, Linley belonged to the Radiant Church. In the past, when Clayde had invited Linley to join the ranks of the nobles in the Kingdom of Fenlai, he had even said that between the two of them, there was no need to observe the normal protocols between king and subject.

Clearly, Clayde desired to pull Linley closer to him.

And all of the nobles of the Kingdom of Fenlai knew that if Linley were willing, he could probably easily become a Vicar of the Radiant Church. In a few dozen years, it would be quite natural for Linley to become a Cardinal.

The status of a Cardinal was even higher than that of the King!

"Can't force her." Nimitz felt a headache coming. He was worried that Alice would refuse. He pondered things from Linley's point of view.

Alice was, after all, previously Linley's first love! If he, Nimitz, were to force

Alice to meet Merritt, and she were to lose her chastity, how could Linley not explode with rage?

Within the Debs clan's manor.

The clan hall was filled with many members of the Debs clan. Alice and Rowling were there as well. All of them were awaiting the return of Nimitz.

They were all worrying about the future of the Debs clan!

"Second Uncle is back! Second Uncle is back!" A middle-aged man standing in the doorway saw Nimitz and began to call out.

Instantly, all of the members of the Debs clan rushed out towards Nimitz en masse. Alice and Rowling exchanged glances, then rose and went to welcome him as well.

"Second Uncle, what's the situation?"

Nimitz looked at the group of people in front of him. Squeezing out a smile, he said, "The situation isn't too bad yet. Everyone, go back to your residences. Alice, stay. I need to talk to you."

Within the clan, Nimitz had a great deal of authority. Hearing his words, everyone departed.

Alice was somewhat confused, confused as to what Nimitz wanted to talk to her about.

"Big sister Alice, I'll go back to my room now," Rowling waved towards Alice and said in a quiet voice. A short period of time later, the only person left in the hall was Alice.

Nimitz stepped into the hall.

"Second Granduncle, what's wrong?" Alice stuttered.

Nimitz looked at Alice. Suddenly, he smiled warmly towards her. "Alice, don't be nervous. Sit down first. Let's have a good talk." As he spoke, Nimitz sat down as well.

Why was Nimitz, who previously was so stern to her, who seemed to always look down on her, being so warm to her now?

Alice couldn't help but feel suspicious.

"Come, sit." Nimitz's smile was so kind, so warm.

Alice nervously sat down.

Nimitz let out a long breath. Worry appeared between his brows. "Alice, we didn't expect that this would happen so soon after you and Kalan got engaged. I don't know who is secretly framing our Debs clan. If I did, I would kill him." A baleful aura appeared on Nimitz's face, but then it transformed into a look of helplessness. "But right now, the most important thing is to cleanse this stain from our name, and rescue Kalan and Bernard."

Alice nodded.

But in her heart, Alice was suspicious. "Why is Second Granduncle saying these things to me?"

Staring at Alice, Nimitz said with sincerity, "Alice, there is something I must beg of you."

"Beg me?" Alice was so startled, she rose to her feet.

Such was Nimitz's standing within the clan that even the clan leader would be respectful to him. But now, Nimitz was saying that he had to beg her to do something. How could Alice not be shocked?

"Alice, Lord Merritt is in charge of investigating this allegation that the Debs clan was engaged in the smuggling of water jade. Lord Merritt is very intrigued by you and wants to meet with you privately."

Nimitz said urgently to her, "Alice, this is a rare, wonderful opportunity to improve our relationship with him. Only by managing to have a good relationship with Lord Merritt would you be able to help our clan. Alice, you grew up alongside Kalan. You don't want to see him in jail either, right?"

Alice was stunned.

A private meeting?

Alice was someone who had lived in a noble clan as well, and knew all too well about the shameful things which occurred amongst the nobility. She instantly could guess that this meeting with Lord Merritt would be more than a

simple meeting.

“I... I...” Alice stuttered.

Nimitz begged, “Alice, our entire Debs clan is relying on you. I can even guarantee that so long as you can pull Lord Merritt to our side, you will be Kalan’s principal wife.”

Alice felt as though her mind was in shambles.

Alice was still pure and chaste of body.

She had refused to cross that last barrier with both Linley and Kalan. Even after getting engaged to Kalan, Alice still insisted on being married before she would enter the bridal bed with him.

But now she had to go deal with Lord Merritt...

“Alice, I’m begging you.” Nimitz gritted his teeth, leaving his chair and falling to his knees before her. “Alice, Kalan’s life is in your hands.”

“Kalan’s life?” Alice trembled.

Kalan had grown up alongside her. In recent days, in the face of ridicule and scorn from the other members of the Debs clan, it had been Kalan who protected her.

“Alright. I agree.” Alice gritted her teeth.

A look of surprised joy appeared on Nimitz’s face, then he hurriedly said, “Wonderful. How about this. Tomorrow at dusk, I’ll arrange for you to be brought to Lord Merritt’s manor.”

But right now, Alice’s face was extremely pale. She didn’t respond at all.

That next evening. Escorted by twelve knights, a carriage departed from the Debs clan’s manor, slowly rolling towards the manor of Lord Merritt. Within the carriage was only one person: Alice.

Alice quietly sat within the carriage, chewing on her lips. Her nervous hands were tightly gripping her dress.

The carriage continued to roll forward. Quite soon, it arrived at the main gate to Lord Merritt’s manor.

“Miss Alice, we’re here.” The voice of the carriage driver rang out from outside.

Hearing his words, Alice’s heart trembled. Her right hand drifted down to her waist. The firmness of the steel dagger by her side helped to slightly calm her mind down.

Taking a deep breath, Alice pushed open the carriage to the door and stepped out.

Within the welcoming hall of Lord Merritt’s manor.

Wearing a jacket on top and a skirt beneath, Alice was dressed relatively conservatively. Step by step, Alice managed to enter the hall relatively calmly. Alice looked around her, but saw nobody there within the hall.

“Hrm?” Alice couldn’t help but frown.

Just at this moment, a female attendant ran over. Respectfully, she said, “Miss Alice, the Lord Duke is in his study and would like to invite you there as well.”

“His study?” Alice shuddered slightly.

But under the urging gaze of the attendant, Alice still began to walk forwards with her.

The study was in a very quiet, secluded area. There were very few people here. Arriving at the door to the study, Alice saw a seemingly middle-aged, golden-haired man standing in front of a study desk, staring at some papers.

“This is Merritt?” Seeing Merritt, Alice’s first impression was that this was a very fierce person. Even when he sat down at his desk, his back was ramrod straight, and his eyes were sharp.

“Lord Duke, Miss Alice has arrived,” that female attendant said respectfully.

Only now did Merritt raise his head. Seeing Alice, he excitedly rose to his feet. “Haha, Miss Alice, you came? I’ve waited for quite a long time. Come, Miss Alice, please sit.” As he spoke, he left his seat and walked towards Alice.

Alice stepped into the study.

Alice looked around her. Towards the right side of the study, there were many bookshelves, covered with countless books. On the left side of the study, there was a bed.

“Often, when I’m reading or taking care of government affairs, I’ll get tired and will rest there,” Duke Merritt said with a smile. At the same time, he walked towards the study door and shut it.

Seeing the door to the study shut, leaving behind only her and Merritt in the room, Alice grew nervous.

“Lord Merritt, it’s better if we leave the door to the study open. I’m not accustomed to dark environments,” Alice hurriedly said.

## Limits

As he closed the door to the study, Merritt heard Alice's words. He couldn't help but turn to Alice with a smile. "Miss Alice, we're going to discuss the affairs of the Debs clan. We can't discuss those openly and publicly, can we? If his Majesty were to find out, then I would be in serious trouble. You should know that I'm taking on serious risks on behalf of your Debs clan. Best we leave the door closed."

Alice was stunned.

In terms of wordplay, how could Alice match this Lord Merritt, who had engaged in the highest levels of court intrigue for so long?

Smiling, Merritt walked past her. In front of the bookshelf, there were two chairs around a round table. Merritt would often chat with some of his friends here.

Merritt first sat down, then looked at Alice. "Alice, you should sit."

"Thank you, Lord Merritt." Alice secretly let out a sigh of relief, then sat down on the opposite chair. The thing which made Alice the most nervous in this study was that bed.

"Please wait a moment."

Smiling, Merritt rose to his feet, then pulled out a bottle of red wine and two wine cups. He poured himself and Alice a cup of wine each.

"Alice, this is the Bluerain red wine from the Yulan Empire, a sixty-year-old vintage. The flavor isn't bad. Have a taste." Merritt smiled as he raised his glass to her.

Alice was somewhat afraid that some sort of knockout drug had been mixed into the wine. But, under Merritt's gaze, Alice was forced to raise her own glass as well. Only, she just barely touched the wine with her lips.



Merritt didn't force her. Changing the topic, he said, "Alice, you and Kalan have already become engaged. I expect you know quite a bit about the affairs of the Debs clan. Did you know they were engaged in smuggling?"

"No, I didn't. I think Kalan wouldn't engage in smuggling," Alice hurriedly said. "Lord Merritt, the Debs clan is quite powerful. I think they wouldn't engage in this smuggling business."

With a smile that wasn't a smile, Merritt looked at Alice. "Hard to say."

"Ah!"

Merritt seemed to have seen something, and all of a sudden, he moved next to Alice, so close that his face was mere centimeters away from Alice's face.

Startled, Alice hurriedly retreated.

"Don't move." Merritt's shouted carried a hint of a command.

Born from long years of being accustomed to power, Merritt's commanding voice froze Alice in her tracks, as ill at ease as she was. Merritt carefully inspected Alice's hair, then looked down at Alice.

Upon lowering his head, his face was now only a few centimeters away from Alice's. This made Alice hurriedly bend her head away from him.

Seeing this, Merritt laughed, then returned to his original seat. He let out a helpless sigh. "Just then, I saw a single white hair on your head, but after you moved, I couldn't see it anymore."

A strand of white hair?

In her heart, Alice began to grow irritated. She lived together with Rowling now, and every morning, when they were bored, they would comb each other's hair. Often, she would find some white hairs on Rowling's head. But Rowling often expressed envy towards Alice, as she could never find white hair on Alice's head.

Rowling couldn't find any white hair despite combing Alice's hair every day. How could Merritt have found any?

But Alice didn't dare to say this.

“Alice, you are still young. Don’t be too upset. If you are upset, you’ll age faster, and thus have white hair,” Merritt said solicitously.

Alice only quietly listened to him as he spoke.

Merritt nudged his chair in Alice’s direction, then fixed his gaze upon Alice. “Alice, you are quite beautiful, you know. Your charm and aura of refinement are really quite mesmerizing to behold.”

Alice couldn’t help but feel shy and nervous.

Merritt leaned forward slightly, staring intensely at Alice. “Alice. Those wives of mine, all they care about are superficial things like money and glory. They seem so vulgar, so low. But you are totally different. Truly, you are, you know. The very first time I saw you, I was stunned.”

“I very much regret that I ended up marrying women such as them.” Merritt suddenly reached out and held Alice’s hand. Alice’s eyes suddenly widened. Merritt continued to look at Alice. “Alice, if I... if I were to tell you that I love you from the bottom of my heart, that I am smitten with you, would you believe me?”

Alice hurriedly stood up... but Merritt maintained his tight grip on her hand.

“Lord Merrit, Lord Merritt. I’m the fiancée of Kalan!” Alice struggled, and only after three attempts was she able to break free from Merritt’s grip.

Merritt looked at Alice with a smile. “As you say, you are only a fiancée, which means you aren’t married yet. You totally can marry another. As for Kalan, what does a kid like him know about having fun?”

As he spoke, Merritt once more moved nearer to Alice, while Alice continued to move back.

But in her nervousness, Alice didn’t notice in the slightest that Merritt was pressuring her into the direction of the bed.

“Alice. I really have fallen for you. I swear!” Merritt stared soulfully at Alice.

Merritt wasn’t lying. Over the course of admiring the sculpture ‘Awakening From the Dream’, and then upon seeing Alice herself, he really did fall for Alice. But this sort of ‘falling for’ was only a desire to possess.

“Lord Merritt!” Alice was growing frantic.

Suddenly, Alice’s back legs collided with the bed. Knocked off balance, Alice fell backwards onto the mattress.

A hint of a smile appeared on Merritt’s face. He immediately threw himself on top of Alice, all but pressing his body against hers. “Alice, my goddess, please satisfy the desires of this mortal who has been mesmerized by you. If you satisfy my desires, I’ll satisfy yours as well and clear the unjust stains from the Debs clan.”

Clear the stains of the Debs clan?

Staring at Merritt who was right on top of her, Alice couldn’t help but suddenly think back to a night she had been with Linley at a small hotel. The two of them had entangled themselves lustfully, but at the very end, she had stopped Linley.

How could she give up her chastity to this man in front of her?

“My goddess, come to me.” Merritt’s voice was very soft, as though he was trying to hypnotize her.

“No. No!”

Alice suddenly pulled the dagger from her waist and thrust it at Merritt. At the same time, the stones on the floor flew at Merritt.

Alice was an earth-style magus, after all!

But Merritt himself was a powerful warrior. His reflexes were very fast, and he quickly dodged to one side while at the same time slapping the dagger out of Alice’s hand.

Alice instantly dodged towards the other side, running for the door.

But with a flicker of his body, Merritt appeared between her and the door. With a smile that was not a smile on his face, he looked at Alice. “Alice. Do you still want to resist? Based on your prowess as a magus and that little knife, you want to resist me?”

“Lord Merritt, let me leave.” By now, Alice was firm in her resolve.

“You no longer wish to save the Debs clan? You don’t wish to save your fiancé, Kalan?” Merritt asked.

Alice’s eyes were determined. Gritting her teeth, she said, “Although I do wish to save them, this is not the way to do it. You beast!”

“Beast?” The expression on Merritt’s face changed. He coldly said, “Originally, I wanted for the mood to be a bit more romantic, but since you refuse to cooperate, then I’ll show you what a beast really looks like.”

Alice’s face turned pale.

“Merritt. Don’t go too far.” Frightened, Alice quickly retreated, grabbing the chair next to her and smashing it at Merritt.

With a single fist, Merritt easily broke the chair apart.

“Don’t resist. This place... is my manor,” Merritt said with a soft laugh.

Watching Merritt draw step by step closer to her, Alice gritted her teeth and said wildly, “Merritt! You’d best not forget that I once was Linley’s woman!”

These words halted Merritt in his tracks, stunning him.

Alice really did not want to say these words. She knew that her actions of the past had wounded Linley very deeply, and she didn’t want to have anything more to do with him. But at this point in time, she could think of no other way.

“Linley?” Standing there without moving, Merritt frowned.

Biting her lips, Alice stared at Merritt. “Merritt, I can pretend that nothing at all happened today. But if you go too far, then don’t blame me when I also go all-out afterwards. I trust you know how influential Linley is now.”

Merritt looked at Alice.

He really had been enchanted by Alice, but Merritt knew very well that Linley’s relationship with Alice was very special. Just from looking at that sculpture, ‘Awakening From the Dream’, one could tell how deep Linley’s affection for Alice had been.

“Linley’s feelings towards Alice really was in the realm of true love. If Linley were to find out...” Merritt’s head began to hurt.

Linley.

Very hard to deal with!

The current Linley already possessed incredible influence. Although he, Merritt, was powerful, in the end he was only the Right Premier of a single kingdom. To the Radiant Church, perhaps deposing one of the rulers of a kingdom was something it would do only after serious consideration, but they wouldn't even think twice before dealing with the Right Premier of a kingdom.

All Linley had to do was to ask the Radiant Church for their assistance. Dealing with him, a Right Premier, wouldn't be a problem.

But in the future, Linley would only be more formidable. This was one of the reasons why not a single member of the nobles of the Kingdom of Fenlai had dared to plot against Linley or make attempts against Linley's life, which was why, in front of Linley, they all behaved so courteously.

"Alas..." Merritt let out a long sigh. "Alice, I really, truly, have fallen for you from the depths of my heart, so much so that I lost my sense of rationality."

Merritt smiled apologetically at Alice. "I apologize. I've come back to my senses now. Since you aren't willing or able to have feelings for me, of course I cannot force myself on."

"Lord Merritt, I'll take my leave, then." Alice quickly scurried to the door, opened it, then rushed out.

Seeing Alice depart, the apologetic look dropped from Merritt's face, and his gaze grew vicious and cold. With a cold sneer, he spat out the word, "Bitch!"

By the time Alice had returned to the Debs clan manor, it was now totally dark.

Right now, all of the members of the Debs clan were in the middle of the main hall, eating dinner. Only, the atmosphere wasn't very good. The clan could be exterminated at any time, after all.

"Alice. You returned?" Rowling suddenly saw Alice running inside.

Nimitz and the others all stood up as well.

"As fast as that?" Nimitz frowned. Alice had come back far too early, much

earlier than he had expected.

“Alice, eat dinner with us,” Rowling immediately called to her.

On the walkway past the main hall, Alice glanced at the people inside and said apologetically, “I’m not feeling well. I’ll go back to my room and rest first.” Alice’s voice was very low and hoarse.

Rowling felt that Alice wasn’t acting normally.

“Let me go see how Alice is doing.” Rowling smiled at everyone, then left the hall, leaving behind Nimitz, who was frowning with suspicion.

Alice and Rowling, in their room.

Upon entering the room, Alice had immediately thrown herself into her bed. She could no longer hold back her tears, which poured out. Her heart was filled with wrongs and injustices.

“What did I do wrong? Lord, why must you punish me so?”

Alice was howling with rage in her heart.

“I never asked for much, only that I could have a simple, peaceful life. I want my parents to have a peaceful life, for myself to have a peaceful life. Why, why must you punish me so?” Alice’s heart was filled with misery. True, the Debs clan perhaps was going to be finished.

But what did that have to do with her?

Why did they have to send her to deal with Merritt?

Why did she have to be forced to the point where she had to shout out the words, “I once was Linley’s woman?” How difficult had it been for her to force these words out! Alice truly hadn’t wanted to say that!

“Big sister Alice, what happened?” Rowling ran into the room. Seeing Alice sobbing to the point where there was a huge wet spot on the bed, Rowling grew frantic with worry.

Rowling immediately went over and began to stroke Alice’s back. “Don’t cry, don’t cry. Whatever it is, you can tell me. Tell me.”

Alice immediately turned and threw herself into Rowling’s arms, bawling even

more fiercely. It wasn't as bad without anyone there to comfort her, but now that someone had come, Alice felt all the more aggrieved and wronged.

Rowling comforted Alice for more than half an hour before Alice finally became somewhat calmer.

"Big sister Alice, what exactly happened? Tell me." Rowling looked at Alice.

Alice took a deep breath, then slowly explained the injustice that had been done to her. "Little Rowling, you are also aware of the current situation with the Debs clan. Yesterday, Second Granduncle came and wanted to have a private chat with me. He wanted me to..."

The more she heard, the more fury Rowling felt.

She was angry at Nimitz's behavior. She was angry for what Alice had suffered. And she felt rage towards that beast-like Merritt's behavior. At the same time, she felt sympathy for Alice.

"I don't want to get involved anymore. I just want to live out a peaceful life," Alice said, sobbing sporadically.

Over these past few days, Rowling had been considering what the best way to help the Debs clan was. But upon hearing Alice's story, she suddenly understood a few things.

"Big sister Alice, don't be sad. No matter what, you definitely cannot let that Merritt destroy your chastity." Rowling comforted her.

Alice nodded.

"But we still have to come up with a way to save Kalan and the others," Rowling said. "Big brother Kalan is our fiancé, after all."

Alice also wanted to save him, but she didn't know how.

"We still have an option." Rowling looked at Alice. "But... I don't know if you would be willing to take it, sister Alice."

"Rowling..." Looking at Rowling, Alice had already guessed what she was going to say.

Rowling nodded. "Right. Go ask Linley for help. Today, as soon as you

mentioned his name, that Merritt no longer dared to touch you. Clearly, Linley is extremely influential. Based on what I know, not only does Linley have a relationship with the Radiant Church, he also has a relationship with the Dawson Conglomerate. Even his Majesty, King Clayde, treats Linley as he would a friend, rather than an ordinary subject. If Linley is willing to speak out, we would have a much greater chance of rescuing big brother Kalan.”

Currently, in the Kingdom of Fenlai, without question, people were more willing to defer to Linley than to anyone else.

Even the Left Premier and the Right Premier couldn’t compare with him.

Because, as one could easily tell, in the future Linley would be a high-level person within the Radiant Church. Even right now, he was viewed as an extremely important potential talent who needed to be cultivated and trained. For the sake of Linley, those two Cardinals of the Radiant Church had even gone to Hogg’s funeral and paid their respects to him. From this, one could easily see how important they viewed Linley as being.

“Big brother Linley?” Alice’s emotions were very mixed.

In truth, in Alice’s heart, she knew this was a possibility long ago, but she didn’t want to confront it. She truly didn’t wish to go beg Linley. She felt that she didn’t have the face to see him again.

She knew that she had wounded Linley too heavily. That moment when she had seen that sculpture, ‘Awakening From the Dream’, Alice understood how deeply Linley loved her. Or at least, how deeply he had once loved her.

She was ashamed to meet him!

“Big sister Alice, I understand your feelings.” Rowling tightly gripped Alice by the hands. “But, big sister Alice, big brother Kalan and his father are very likely to lose their lives. I beg you, please just suffer a bit on our behalf. At least Linley won’t act the way that Merritt did.”

Alice’s heart was filled with pain.

“No face? Is my self-respect more important, or are the lives of big brother Kalan and his father more important?” Alice asked herself this question. She had no other choice.



“Big sister Alice.” Rowling stared beseechingly at Alice.

Alice took a deep breath, forcing herself to calm down. Looking at Rowling, she nodded. “Alright. I’ll go see big brother Linley tomorrow.”

## The Plea

At the manor of the Prime Court Magus. Within the Hot Springs Garden.

An earthen glow emanated from a patch of grass within the Hot Springs Garden. Earth magic – Supergravity Field. Right now, Linley was dressed only in a pair of long pants, his upper body bare as he trained in the grass.

Those muscles on his bare upper body rippled like water. There wasn't a trace of excess flesh. Right now, Linley's body, organs, veins, and arteries were all being forced to withstand a gravity four times stronger than normal.

Fortunately, after becoming a Dragonblood Warrior, Linley's body had reached new heights in power.

Linley's legs were arched in a bow-drawing stance, and his two hands were raised parallel by his sides, each holding up a giant boulder. Each of these boulders weighed over a hundred pounds. Under the quadruple gravity field, the two combined weighed nearly a thousand pounds.

His legs as taut as steel cables, Linley's body was as straight as a quill. His gaze, fixed in front of him, didn't waver either.

One drop of sweat after another rolled down Linley's body, covering his entire body in sweat. But Linley persevered...

Despite being designated the Prime Court Magus for the kingdom, Linley continued to train non-stop every day. His guards stood solemnly outside, alongside two female attendants who were ready to answer Linley's call at any moment. The door to the Hot Springs Garden, however, was closed.

Whenever Linley was training, no one was permitted to enter.

Once, his majesty King Clayde, ruler of Fenlai, had come to the manor. The palace attendant ignored the guards at the Hot Springs Garden and charged in directly, instructing Linley to meet with his Majesty. Linley immediately issued

an order for that attendant to receive twenty strikes of the military rod. That physically weak attendant ended up being beaten to death.

But afterwards, King Clayde didn't blame Linley in the slightest. On the contrary, he berated his subordinates, telling them that while at the Hot Springs Garden, they absolutely must obey Linley's rules.

"Lord Linley is always so hard-working when he trains. He's spent an entire day in there. When he's not engaging in warrior training, he is engaging in magus training. I think the only time he ever rests is the time he spends in his stone sculpting," one female attendant said in a low voice. The other female attendant also nodded. "I've never seen such a hard-working noble before. In the previous household I worked for, the instructor for the warriors himself only spent four hours a day training."

The nearby guardian knights of the Radiant Church also felt a great deal of admiration for Linley. Most geniuses, after their initial glory, would begin to fall behind. Each year, the Radiant Church would train a good number of geniuses. However, not only were none of those geniuses as outstanding as Linley, once their status had risen, they would become totally distracted by the material pleasures of the world and fall behind.

"If Lord Linley continues like this, in all likelihood, he will be the youngest combatant of the ninth rank in history, and the youngest Saint-level in history as well," one of the guardian knights said softly.

The other guardian knight also nodded.

All of these people very much admired Linley's painstaking diligence in training.

Only..."Lord Linley is a bit too strict and severe," one of the female attendants said in an unhappy voice.

In their hearts, Linley was handsome, young, had high standards for himself, and powerful. He had a future! A person like him could be considered to be all but perfect. Only, he was extremely severe towards others. Even when dealing with female servants like them, he didn't act with any gentleness or affection.

What these people didn't know was that although Linley did engage in stone

sculpting, he wasn't really resting; when he was stone sculpting, he was increasing his spiritual energy at the fastest rate possible! Linley's was increasing his power at every moment!

Within the Hot Springs Garden.

"Whew."

An hour of warrior's training had come to an end. Linley began to activate the Dragonblood battle-qi in his body, and that tired, weary feeling disappeared. From a nearby box, Linley withdrew a straight chisel, then walked over to one of those two boulders he had dropped onto the grass. These were used by Linley when stone sculpting.

Staring at these boulders and their internal lines and structure, Linley began to mentally design a sculpture. In the blink of an eye, a mental image of a warrior's face was formed.

A hint of a smile on his face, the straight chisel in Linley's hand began to move.

In a very rhythmic pattern, the straight chisel flew and chopped about, causing shattered bits of stone to fly everywhere. Linley knew exactly what he was doing, and so each chop was made with absolute confidence, and the strength he used was just right.

What a wonderful feeling!

Linley's spirit became submerged within the ebbs and vibrations of the surrounding earth elemental essence, allowing him to sense the lines and cracks of the stone. Linley's spirit also submerged into the surrounding wind elemental essence, allowing every single stroke of the knife to reach the peak of perfection in accuracy.

Nature!

Linley's soul had become one with nature, and like a benevolent mother, nature surrounded Linley's soul, allowing it to grow, to strengthen.

"Whew."

Letting out a breath, Linley withdrew his straight chisel.

After spending two hours, this giant boulder had been transformed into a rough outline. As for the fine details, Linley planned to finish those tomorrow. Every day, Linley set limits on how much time he could spend on his stone sculpting.

He had to use the right complement of training regimes to achieve the maximum effect in terms of raising his power!

Training started every day at five in the morning, while now, it was eight o'clock. It was time for Linley to eat breakfast.

Putting down his straight chisel, Linley stepped out of his pants and into the hot springs pool. Lying within the hot springs, feeling the hot springs water rush against his muscles, Linley closed his eyes comfortably, finally allowing himself some time to rest.

"Enter," Linley suddenly shouted.

Those two female attendants who had been quietly standing outside the door this entire time immediately entered with two trays. Those round trays were covered with all sorts of delicacies and fruits.

"Lord Linley." Those two female attendants put the two round trays down on the nearby table, then respectfully awaited Linley's commands.

While obediently standing to the side, those two female attendants couldn't help but sneak peeks at Linley. Linley's naked, muscular, reclining male body was indeed a source of fascination to them.

"You can go for now."

Linley said calmly.

"Yes, milord." The two female attendants immediately left respectfully.

From start to finish, Linley had not glanced at them even once.

Next, Linley stepped out of the pool, put on a set of clean underwear and clothes, then sat on a chair and began to eat breakfast.

"Swish." A black shadow rushed out from the faraway grassy fields. It was Bebe. Before this, when Linley was training and stone sculpting, Bebe was napping.

“Boss, it’s time for breakfast, eh? Alright, this big piece of roast meat is mine.” Bebe’s eyes instantly were drawn to a particular large piece of roasted magical beast meat.

Linley chuckled.

“Grandpa Doehring, do we really have no method available to us to deal with that Clayde at present?” Linley mentally said to Doehring Cowart.

Doehring Cowart flew out of the Coiling Dragon ring. Seating himself on another chair, he smiled at Linley. “Linley, Clayde is a warrior of the ninth rank. The gap between the two of you is too vast. Even if you assume the complete Dragonform, you are only a warrior of the early-stage eighth rank. Oh, wait, now that you are currently a late-stage warrior of the sixth rank, when you assume the Dragonform, you can be considered to be a late-stage warrior of the eighth rank. But nonetheless, you are far from being a match for Clayde.”

Linley felt very unwilling to accept this. He knew, now, that the person who had instructed his mother to be abducted by Duke Patterson was King Clayde. But right now, he had no chance of dealing with Clayde at all.

“The only choice I have is to continue training hard.” Linley unconsciously balled his fists, with the fork in his hands warping from his strength.

In the early ranks, the extra boost provided by the Dragonform transformation was especially large. As a warrior of the late-stage sixth rank, based on his current training regime, in about half a year, there was hope for Linley to reach the seventh rank. Upon reaching the seventh rank of power, when using the Dragonform, Linley would be able to step into the early-stage ninth rank.

“Lord Linley.” The voice of a female attendant could be heard from outside.

“Come in,” Linley said calmly.

Only now did the female attendant rush in. Respectfully, she said, “Lord Linley, outside, there’s a young lady named Alice who wishes to meet you.”

“Alice?” Linley’s eyelids flickered. He looked at the female attendant. “Bring her to the guest hall. I will be there shortly.” Linley stood up as he spoke.

“Yes, Lord Linley.” The female attendant didn’t dare to tease Linley in the slightest. They all knew how legendarily severe Linley was with his subordinates.



\*

Alice was clutching a glass of water, seeming very ill at ease. For her to come beg Linley was asking a lot of her. But she had no other choice.

Footsteps could be heard.

Alice’s entire body shook, and she immediately turned her head to look.

Dressed in a loose, long robe, Linley smiled as he entered from an inner hall. Seeing Alice look at him, he immediately nodded and smiled back. “Alice, long time no see.” As he spoke, Linley sat down at the host’s seat.

Alice could clearly feel that Linley’s attitude was now totally different from a year ago. A year ago, Linley was still very young and immature.

But now, Linley carried himself with an unconscious noble grace and poise. Just from that faint smile, one could sense his grandeur, a grandeur which only came from someone being assured of his high status.

“Big brother Linley.” Alice forced her voice to sound calm, but even despite that, her voice still trembled slightly.

“Would you like to eat some fruit? I remember that you loved to eat olives.” Linley glanced at one of his female attendants.

A short time later, the female attendant returned with a plate of fruit.

“Thank you.” Alice picked up an olive and took a small bite. At this moment, Alice couldn’t help but think back to when she and Linley had eaten olives together. Back then, Linley had fed them to her.

Alice couldn’t help but turn to look up at Linley, only to find that Linley was smiling at her.

“Big brother Linley.” Alice put down the fruit, looking at Linley. “There’s something I want to ask your help with.”

“You need my help?” Linley had already guessed at the reason behind this visit of Alice’s.

“Go ahead,” Linley said directly.

Alice took a deep breath, then looked at Linley seriously. “Big brother Linley, you already know about what is happening with Kalan’s clan. I think... Kalan and the others are innocent. I hope you, big brother Linley, can help them and say a few words on their behalf to his Majesty. I hope you can wash away these unjust accusations and return their innocence to them. I know that his Majesty will definitely give you face.”

Linley couldn’t help but laugh helplessly.

Innocence?

Others might not be aware, but how could he, who had killed Patterson, be unaware? When he had killed Patterson, Patterson had personally told him about this smuggling affair. There was an 80% to 90% chance that this was with regards to the Debs clan!

“Wash away these unjust accusations? Why do you believe they are innocent? Alice, how much do you really know about the Debs clan?” Linley looked at Alice.

Alice was startled.

It had taken her a tremendous amount of courage to force out those words just now. But after Linley answered her with a question, she had a feeling... that Linley wasn’t going to help!

She suddenly wanted to cry. She felt extremely miserable.

Alice stood up. Curtseying towards Linley, she said, “Big brother Linley, I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have come here today. I know that in the past, I hurt you very deeply. For me to come now and ask you to help save the Debs clan is really excessive of me. It’s okay if you don’t help. I won’t blame you.” As Alice saw it, Linley and Kalan were rivals in love. It was already very kind of Linley not to throw more stones in the drying well, to kick him when he was down.

As he looked at Alice, Linley’s heart was very calm



With regards to his failed relationship with his first love, Linley now regarded it only as a bygone dream. The current Linley had already experienced the battle in the Foggy Valley, the transformation into a Dragonblood Warrior, and the death of his father. And now, he had embarked on a dark road of vengeance!

On the road to vengeance, the thing which Linley had to do was to suppress himself, to be cruel, to be cold, to not slacken in the slightest. The current Linley was, mentally, far stronger than he had been a year ago, and far more mature as well. That young, naïve Linley of a year ago couldn't compare at all to the current Linley. He also wasn't the Linley that Alice thought he was.

After having experienced so much, he had matured! Linley had experienced far too much!

"Big brother Linley, I'll leave now." Alice immediately stood to leave, her tears at the precipice of coming out.

"Alice." Linley stood up as well, stretching his hand out and resting it against Alice's shoulders.

Alice turned her head to stare at Linley in amazement. Linley was gazing at her. In a serious voice, he said, "Alice, there's so much that you don't know. Whether or not the Debs clan is innocent isn't something that you can determine. However, since you made up your mind to come ask me for help, I won't just stand by and watch. But... whether or not I'll be able to succeed in saving them is another question."

## The Visit

Alice felt her heart suddenly tremble. A warm feeling suddenly rushed into her heart, a sensation of thankfulness mixed with a boundless regret.

“Big brother Linley, thank you. Thank you.” Alice couldn’t help but repeat herself. Her tears were already beginning to shimmer in her eyes. The tears of excitement.

Linley smiled. “Go back. This afternoon, I’ll pay a visit to his Majesty at his palace.”

Linley could feel that right now, his heart was very calm when he saw Alice. When seeing Alice, all he was seeing was a female friend whom he was on good terms with. Nothing more.

“Alright. Thank you.” Alice glanced at Linley one more time, then turned her head and left, her thoughts extremely complicated.

Originally, Alice was afraid that because in the past, she had hurt Linley, Linley would feel hatred for Kalan, which would cause Linley to not help save Kalan. But Linley’s reaction had been totally out of her expectations. Linley wasn’t agitated at all. He was very calm.

Watching Alice’s departing back, Linley sat down. Grabbing a fruit, he began to casually eat it. At this time, Bebe popped out as well.

“Boss, you’re gonna help that Alice? If it were me, I would’ve kicked her out long ago. Heck, it’s enough that you didn’t just slap her to death with one palm!” Bebe said unhappily.

Linley glanced at Bebe. “Bebe, humans aren’t magical beasts.”

At this time, Doehring Cowart flew out of the Coiling Dragon ring. Looking at Linley with an approving gaze, he said, “Linley, you performed very well. I was a bit worried that you’d have a child’s temper and shoo her away, throwing

another stone into a drying well.”

“A child’s temper?” Linley was startled.

In Doehring Cowart’s eyes, such behavior was indeed that of a child.

“That’s right. Women, psh. They are all over the place.” Doehring Cowart chuckled.

Linley was instantly speechless. He was very much not in favor of Doehring Cowart’s viewpoint on women, which was rather similar to the viewpoints of Yale and Reynolds.

“Alright, enough chat. I need to continue my training.” Linley immediately rose and returned to the Hot Springs Garden.

As far as Linley was considered, Alice was nothing more than a side-episode, incapable of affecting his mood. Right now, the only thing Linley cared about was... avenging his father.



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“His Majesty is in his study, laboring over affairs of state. Lord Linley, please come with me to the study,” the palace attendant said respectfully.

Linley nodded.

Bebe standing on his shoulders, Linley followed the attendant towards the study. After a while, they finally arrived.

“Your Majesty! Lord Linley has arrived!” The palace attendant called out loudly from outside the door to the study.

Clayde, who had been absorbed in reading some texts, raised his head. When his tiger-like gaze landed upon Linley, his eyes shone excitedly. Laughing loudly, he said, “Linley, quick, come in. There’s no need for the two of us to stand on so much ceremony.”

“Yes, your Majesty.” Linley laughed faintly as he entered the study. Clayde, in Linley’s eyes, really was a bold, straightforward man, and was incredibly polite when interacting with Linley, never using his position as the king to try and bully

him.

“If it wasn’t for my father’s death,” Linley mused to himself, “Perhaps you and I would’ve become friends. But there will come a day where I must kill you. Right now, the only thing I am lacking is an opportunity.” Linley had never hesitated in his determination to kill Clayde.

As soon as he had the opportunity, he would definitely kill him.

Clayde clinked wine cups with Linley in a toast, took a sip, then said, “Linley. It is quite rare that you would voluntarily come pay a visit to the palace. What business do you, my Prime Court Magus, have to discuss with me today?”

Linley chuckled.

The Prime Court Magus actually had quite a few responsibilities, but Linley had never undertaken any of them. He allowed the other court magi to assume many of the responsibilities, and Clayde had never given him any pressure. After all, Linley was only a servant of the Kingdom of Fenlai in name. All he was doing... was showing that he, Linley, considered himself to be on Clayde’s side.

“It’s true that I came here today to discuss something.” Linley smiled as he looked at Clayde. “With the Debs clan under suspicion of smuggling water jade, your Majesty ordered that Kalan and Bernard be seized, right?”

“That is so.” Clayde frowned as he looked at Linley. “What, you’ve also come to speak on their behalf?”

Over this period of time, quite a few nobles had come to speak on behalf of the Debs clan. The reason they had done this was because the Debs clan had made use of their fortune.

“If you really want to save their clan, I can indeed give you face,” Clayde said forthrightly.

The only thing Clayde really wanted to do was to break the power structure that had been erected by his younger brother Patterson. As for the Debs clan, he was going to dispose of them just as a matter of course. He was totally willing to pardon the Debs clan in exchange for Linley now owing him a favor. After all, even if he were to pardon the Debs clan, he could also squeeze them for quite a hefty price in the process.

“No.” Linley only shook his head. “I haven’t come to speak on their behalf.”

“What?” Clayde looked curiously at Linley.

Linley said casually, “Your Majesty, the question of whether or not the Debs clan engaged in the smuggling of water jade naturally has to be handled in a fair, aboveboard manner.”

“Oh?” Clayde looked questioningly at Linley. “Then Linley, the reason you came today was because...”

Linley laughed. “I’m thinking that it’s enough for you to have seized the clan leader, Bernard, due to your suspicion that the Debs clan engaged in the smuggling of water jade. As for his son, there’s no need to seize him. After all, what’s the point of seizing a successor? If you seize the first one, they’ll still have a second one. As long as their clan isn’t exterminated, someone will continue the line.”

“Linley, you mean to say...” Clayde looked at Linley.

Linley looked back at Clayde. “Your Majesty, I hope you can release Kalan.”

“Oh, release Kalan. I heard that you and Kalan...?” Clayde had done a very thorough investigation on Linley. Naturally, he knew of the complicated history between Linley, Kalan, and Alice.

Linley let out a helpless laugh. “Your Majesty, that was a long time ago.”

Clayde reminded him, “Linley, I must remind you that based on my investigations, this Kalan fellow is a very vicious, narrow-minded person who can hold a grudge.”

“I know.” Linley nodded slightly.

Based on the few interactions he had with Kalan, Linley had already sensed that Kalan viewed him with hostility. And... Linley knew that during the seven day exhibition of his sculpture, ‘Awakening From the Dream’, someone had desired to destroy it.

Destroying a sculpture was an act which benefited nobody.

Aside from Kalan, Linley couldn’t think of anyone else who would want to destroy ‘Awakening From the Dream’.

“Then why do you help him?” Clayde continued.

“Your Majesty. Do you believe a narrow-minded man of limited vision such as him is someone I would be concerned about?” Smiling, Linley looked at Clayde. Clayde blinked, then laughed as well.

“Right. In the past, it could be said that you and Kalan were old acquaintances. But now, not only does he not wish to befriend you, he even harbors enmity towards you. It is his father who continues to try and befriend you. Compared to his father, Kalan’s vision really is very limited.” Clayde laughed loudly.

Clayde patted Linley on the shoulders. “Don’t worry. I’ll instruct Merritt to handle this case fairly and to investigate everything thoroughly. The Debs clan definitely won’t suffer any injustice. But if the Debs clan really was guilty of smuggling water jade, I won’t allow them to escape punishment either.”

“Right. Handle the case fairly.” Linley nodded.

On the way back home in the carriage, Bebe was lying atop of Linley’s thighs.

“Wow, Boss, you are so evil. The leader of the Debs clan definitely engaged in smuggling. Later on, his clan will be finished. Even if Kalan is able to escape for now, in the future, he’ll still be in terrible straits!” Bebe said excitedly.

Bebe had wanted to destroy Kalan a long time ago. Linley shook his head with a laugh. “Whether or not the Debs clan really will be finished is hard to say. For example, they could give the majority of their clan’s fortune directly to King Clayde, and perhaps Clayde would give them a way out. But no matter what, now that they’ve fallen into Clayde’s hands, even if they don’t die, they’ll lose several layers of skin and flesh.”

Linley fully understood how dark the world of nobles could be. Although on the surface, they talked about handling things fairly, that was nothing more than a sham. “Compared to Clayde, the Debs clan is too weak.” Linley shook his head.

That puny little Kalan was someone Linley had never worried about. Kalan simply wasn’t even close to being on the same level as Linley. The one Linley wanted to deal with was Clayde!

“Milord, we have arrived,” the driver said respectfully.

Linley pushed open the carriage door and stepped out. With a leap, Bebe hopped onto Linley’s shoulders again. Just as Linley was about to enter his manor, a gate guard said respectfully, “Lord, a guest just came by. He’s currently in the main hall waiting for you.”

“A guest? In the main hall?” Linley felt suspicious.

There often would be nobles coming to visit Linley, but without his permission to come in, all of them would quietly wait outside. Only people with a very high status, such as Duke Patterson or King Clayde, or Cardinal Guillermo, would directly head to the main hall, instead of waiting outside.

“Who is it?” Linley couldn’t help but ask.

“No clue, but in his hands, he was holding the medal of a Cardinal,” the guard said respectfully. As a Knight of the Radiant Church, he was very familiar with the insignias of the Cardinals.

Each Cardinal only had a single medal. Naturally, some extremely powerful Ascetics had medals as well. Possession of a medal implied a certain status, representing that this person’s position was no less than that of a Cardinal.

“An insignia?” Linley was startled.

Without hesitating at all, Linley immediately went towards the main hall. By the time Linley passed through the walkway and reached the main hall, he was shocked by who he saw.

Within the main hall was a middle-aged, black-haired man wearing a long, loose robe. Judging from appearances, he was in his thirties or forties. He gave off an indolent, lazy aura.

When Linley saw this middle-aged man, that middle-aged man seemed to sense him as well. He immediately looked over towards Linley, a look of excitement in his eyes. “Master Linley, you came?”

“Master Linley?” Linley’s mind was full of questions, but he quickly entered the main hall.

“You are... oh, I remember now. You were that one who made the bid of ten

million gold coins.” Linley remembered now. During the sculpture auction of ‘Awakening From the Dream’, this middle-aged man was the one who had bid ten million.

The middle-aged man nodded excitedly. “I didn’t expect Master Linley to remember me. This makes me so excited. Oh, right. Let me introduce myself. My name is... Cesar.”

“Cesar?” Linley had never heard this name before.

“Cesar?!” Doebling Cowart’s voice suddenly boomed out in Linley’s mind. “I didn’t imagine that little freak Cesar would still remain on this plane, in the Yulan continent.”

Linley was startled.

Grandpa Doebling knew this Cesar? Grandpa Doebling was from a long gone era! If he knew this man, then how old would this Cesar be?

“Linley, this Cesar is a total freak. His rate of improvement in strength is extremely fast, and he kills without blinking. When I was alive, he had already entered the Saint level. Although back then, he was only an early-stage Saint-level, after five thousand years, based on his rate of improvement, he is most likely far more powerful now.”

Linley’s heart clenched.

The man in front of him appeared to be only thirty or forty, but was actually already a Saint-level combatant during Doebling Cowart’s era. Doebling Cowart had only lived for a thousand years before dying, but this Cesar, if one were to count accurately, had been alive for nearly six thousand years now.

A six-thousand-year-old freak!

“Master Linley, what is it?” Cesar said with concern. “Your face seems to have a rather unpleasant look.”

“Nothing, Mr. Cesar. Please, sit.” Linley forcibly calmed himself down, but whenever he thought of who this person in front of him was, he couldn’t help but be stunned.

A six-thousand-year-old freak, a super-combatant who had survived from the



era of the Pouant Empire until the modern era. He had already been a Saint-level combatant back then. And now?

“Master Linley, I am very much in awe of your sculpting skills. If it weren’t for the fact that Delia, that little girl, begged me, that day I definitely would’ve bought your sculpture.” Cesar pursed his lips as he spoke, but then his eyes lit up. “So Master Linley, when are you and that Delia girl getting married?”

“Married?”

No matter how stunned Linley had been by Cesar, upon hearing these words, Linley’s eyes bulged out of his sockets as he stared speechlessly at Cesar.

## The King of Killers

Cesar stared at Linley suspiciously. “What? Can it be that the little girl of the Leon clan isn’t your fiancée?”

“Fiancée?” Linley mouthed the words.

Seeing Linley’s reaction, Cesar seemed to understand something. Laughing, he said, “Haha, how amusing, how amusing! Master Linley, I must say, that little Miss Delia of the Leon clan has spent quite a lot of trouble on your half. She’s spent a lot of time, a lot of effort, and also gold in order to buy that sculpture of yours, ‘Awakening From the Dream’.”

Linley stared questioningly at Cesar. “Mr. Cesar, can you perhaps tell me where you heard that Delia was my fiancée, and that we were going to get married?”

Cesar stroked his goatee. Delightedly, he said, “Mustn’t say, mustn’t say.”

But in his mind, Cesar thought back to the contents of the letter which Delia had her servant deliver to him. He mused to himself, “For a girl to have the courage to act in such a way shows that her feelings towards Linley are genuine. Best I not say anything, lest I end up embarrassing that little girl, Delia.”

Cesar knew that when a girl told him certain things, it would be rather morally wrong for him to spread it to others as well. He, Cesar... was a very principled man.

Linley buried his curiosity. After all, Cesar describing Delia as his fiancée was a small matter. This man in front of him was a six-thousand-year-old freak. This was what mattered.

“Mr. Cesar, for you to be here with one of the medals of the Radiant Church, does that mean you have come to me on the business of the Radiant Church?” Linley intentionally tried to probe the reason the man had come.

Cesar sat down with a dramatic gesture, then shook his head. “The Radiant Church? Don’t lump me in with those fellows from the Radiant Church.”

“Then this medal?” Linley stared questioningly at Cesar.

Cesar casually said, “Oh. It’s from back when I killed that Cardinal. I figured this medal would eventually come in handy, so I took it from his corpse. On occasion, I’d take it out and present it. I’ve got to say, it really has come in handy over the years.”

“Killed a Cardinal, then casually swiped his medal?” Linley’s heart trembled, and he couldn’t help but feel cold.

This Cesar in front of him really was an extremely forceful person.

Doehring Cowart’s voice rang out in Linley’s mind again. “Linley, back when I was alive, Cesar had already entered the Saint level. At that time, the Radiant Church wasn’t too powerful. After five thousand years, Cesar is definitely at an extremely terrifying level of power. The Radiant Church wouldn’t offend him just because he killed a Cardinal.”

“After all... Cesar is a Saint-level assassination specialist. A Saint-level combatant such as him is far more dangerous than your ordinary Saint-level combatant. What’s more, an assassination specialist, upon reaching the peak of the Saint level, is even more dangerous.”

After hearing Doehring Cowart’s words, Linley began to understand.

In the past, when he was in the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, he had encountered assassins as well. Linley knew very well that despite only being of the sixth rank as well, a specially trained assassin of the sixth rank could be far more dangerous than other combatants of the sixth rank.

Because assassins specialized in ‘ambush’ and in ‘one-hit kills’. When they killed someone, they acted with no scruples or honor at all.

Most Saint-level combatants, on the other hand, cared greatly about their personal honor and reputation.

A peak-stage Saint-level combatant who had no shame and who was an assassin possessed terrifying power.

“That’s the reason why the Radiant Church has never tried to recover the medal from Cesar. This is also the reason why Cesar is able to live so openly in the Holy Capital, Fenlai City.” Doehring Cowart sighed. “This Cesar is really living a rather comfortable life.”

Hearing these words from Doehring Cowart, Linley couldn’t help but feel admiration for Cesar.

“What, are you afraid?” Cesar saw that Linley had fallen silent. He couldn’t help but grin at Linley. “Relax, that was a long time ago. It has been quite a while since I’ve last killed someone.”

Quite a while? How long a period of time was that? Remembering that the man in front of him was a six-thousand-year-old assassin, Linley wasn’t too sure.

“I’m fine. I’m just amazed by Mr. Cesar’s prowess, that you could kill a Cardinal of the Radiant Church, but still live openly here in the Holy Capital.” Linley smiled.

Cesar’s eyes lit up, and he clapped Linley on the shoulders, nodding. “Not bad, not bad. You really are a master sculptor; your mental fortitude is far stronger than most others. Despite knowing my power, you aren’t frightened in the slightest.”

“Master Linley, I’ve come to pay you a visit because I wish to ask something of you.” Cesar looked at Linley, speaking with sincerity.

Linley quickly said, “Mr. Cesar, please speak. As long as it is within my capabilities, I will definitely assist.”

But Cesar put on a stern look, saying, “Master Linley, I, Cesar, have always hated owing favors to others. Since I’m asking a favor of you, naturally I will assist you with something as well.”

Linley felt joy in his heart.

A favor of an assassin who had reached the Saint level over five thousand years ago was priceless. In Linley’s mind, a thought quickly flashed by — Kill Clayde!

This entire time, Linley had been bitterly trying to come up with a way to deal with Clayde, or perhaps capture and interrogate him. Linley absolutely had to find out what happened to his mother. But in terms of both personal power and total forces available, Clayde was far more powerful than Linley. He had no way at all to deal with Clayde.

But now, Linley had a way.

“If I were to invite this Cesar to go kidnap Clayde, that shouldn’t be too hard.” Linley began to grow excited. This problem had already vexed him for a long time. It seemed as though he could resolve it now.

“Mr. Cesar, please tell me what you need,” Linley said seriously.

Cesar said boldly, “Fine, then I’ll just say it outright.”

Rubbing his goatee, Cesar’s attitude was that of chatting with an old friend. “I don’t have too many hobbies. Women, I like. In the past, killing was also a hobby. But after I got bored of killing, I began to take an interest in art. And naturally, I am most infatuated by stone sculpting, that highest of art forms. Master Linley... last time, I felt a great deal of regret for being unable to purchase your sculpture, ‘Awakening From the Dream’. When I went back, I couldn’t even sleep well at night. After tossing and turning many times, I decided to come pay a visit to you in person.”

“Mr. Cesar, what are you trying to say?” Linley’s brow was furrowed.

He had already sold off the sculpture, ‘Awakening From the Dream’. Delia had been the one to buy it.

“I was hoping to ask you, Master Linley, to help me carve a sculpture.” Cesar looked hopefully at Linley.

“Easily done.” Linley quickly agreed. Every day, he spent a few hours training himself by carving sculptures. To spend some of that time carving one for Cesar was an easy task.

“I have a few secondary requirements for this sculpture.” Cesar stood up, looking a bit embarrassed.

Embarrassed!

Right, this six-thousand-year-old freak seemed a bit embarrassed.

“Mr. Cesar, feel free to explain.” Linley looked at Cesar with curiosity.

Cesar chortled. “Master Linley, I hope... this sculpture will be of me, and will capture my unique aura.”

“Use you as my model? Your unique aura?” Linley was startled.

Seeing the look on Linley’s face, Cesar quickly said, “What, will that be hard?”

“No. That isn’t it.” Linley shook his head, frowning. “Using you as the model is very easy. Having seen you once, it’s easy for me to remember what you look like. I can sculpt you without any problems. But it’s a bit more complicated to imbue the statue with your unique aura as well. This is because every person has a different aura at different times, such as one aura for when they are angry, another when they are happy, still another when they are sad, or wounded, or both angry and sad...”

Cesar immediately laughed. “Easy. The aura I want... is the aura I have when I am at my manliest.”

“Your manliest?” Linley looked questioningly at Cesar. “Mr. Cesar, when do you feel you are at your manliest?”

Linley was beginning to wonder if this six-thousand-year-old freak had some mental problems.

Cesar said confidently, “I believe that I appear manliest when I am killing someone! My nickname is the ‘King of Killers’ for a reason, you know!”

Cesar, the ‘King of Killers’!

This was a very terrifying name in the Yulan continent. Neither the Four Great Empires nor the two major alliances wished to offend this individual. Even the four major assassin’s guilds, if they were forced to nominate the most outstanding person within their ranks, would without question select this person who had dominated the Yulan continent for over five thousand years. Cesar, the ‘King of Killers’.

A peak-stage Saint-level combatant, and specialized in assassination techniques! In terms of the numbers and complexity of assassination

techniques he possessed, he had already reached the pinnacle of perfection in this field. Those people who had received some training from Cesar went so far as to say his assassination techniques had reached the field of artistry.

The strongest assassin. The King of Killers!

Although there were quite a few people in the Yulan continent who had become peak-stage Saint-level combatants, such as the Holy Emperor of the Radiant Church, or the Dark Patriarch of the Cult of Shadows, or that Lord Fallen Leaf of the Radiant Church. And of course, the Four Great Empires each had their own peak-stage Saint-levels.

But without question, every single one of these combatants were wary of the King of Killers, Cesar.

Because in terms of assassination, none of them could match him.

The power of the peak-stage Saint-level 'King of Killers' was simply too terrifying. Even the Four Great Empires and the two major alliances held fast to the principle of, 'do not offend him if it is at all possible to avoid doing so', much less the other major clans of the Yulan continent.

Originally, during the auction, Cardinal Lampson and Cardinal Guillermo had been prepared to bid an extremely high price so Linley would feel grateful towards them. But upon seeing Cesar make a bid, they were so scared they no longer dared to bid at all. Even that old servant of the Leon clan, Shaw, had been terrified upon seeing Cesar, the King of Killers. Afterwards, only after Delia had wrote Cesar a letter and obtained his agreement did Delia dare to make another bid.

From this, one could tell how truly formidable this 'King of Killers' was.

Despite him having a medal of a Cardinal for so many years, the Radiant Church had never tried to regain it, and allowed Cesar to use it to deceive others as he pleased without a peep of protest. This was their show of goodwill towards Cesar. As for that Cardinal he had killed, the only thing that could be said was that he died in vain.

"When killing someone?" Linley shook his head. "Mr. Cesar, I've never seen you kill anyone. How would I know what you are like when you kill someone?"

At present, Linley still knew very little regarding the names of the Saint-level combatants of the Yulan continent. Even the world famous 'King of Killers', Cesar, he had never heard of before.

"That's easy. I'll just show you right now what it looks like when I kill someone. Watch carefully." Cesar's attitude instantly changed.

"Wait!" Linley hurriedly shouted out in alarm. "Mr. Cesar, please don't kill anyone in my home."

"Who said I was going to kill someone? I'm just going to show off the way I look when I kill someone, that's all."

Cesar glanced at Linley rather sourly.

Linley laughed awkwardly.

In his heart, he was filled with a great deal of trepidation towards this 'King of Killers', Cesar. When he heard Cesar say he was going to show how he looked upon killing someone, Linley was instantly frightened and wanted to stop him.

"Watch carefully. Pretend my target is that flower vase in front of us," Cesar said calmly.

Cesar's previous attitude had totally changed. He became calm. In the blink of an eye, that lazy, indolent aura of Cesar's totally disappeared, and he became someone without a hint of an aura, without a hint of power, without a hint of emotion.

Cold. Calm.

Linley didn't see anything at all. He only felt the air tremble slightly, and then the flower vase in front of Linley suddenly started to disintegrate, one inch at a time.

Right. As clearly as can be, the flower vase had disintegrated, one inch at a time!

This sensation totally stunned Linley.

"So this is the King of Killers?" In Linley's mind, he firmly memorized this moment. When making his move, Cesar's expression hadn't changed in the slightest. At that moment, Cesar had seemed totally emotionless, and he had



coldly stared at everything in the manor. It was as though in his eyes, all life was nothing more than a blade of grass.

Killing someone was nothing more than cutting a blade of grass.

But Linley also had the feeling that, when Cesar had made his move, all of his attention had been focused on that flower vase.

As though the entire universe had been reduced to the flower vase, and nothing else had existed.

That strange, bizarre feeling made Linley want to vomit blood.

“Did you see it?” Cesar once more became energetic and animated. Casually sitting down, he crossed his legs and looked up at Linley. “What do you think? Do you agree that I look the manliest at that type of moment? I’ve relied on this technique to win the hearts of quite a few young ladies, you know.”

## Poison

Linley firmly etched this scene into his mind.

Faced with Cesar's questions, Linley nodded. "Very charismatic. I've already committed that scene to memory. However, I'm afraid it will be quite difficult for me to make a carving on the same level of 'Awakening From the Dream' again."

A 'Masterpiece' level sculpture appearing in the world was a rare event indeed.

In the past, Linley had been thoroughly heartbroken, and had poured all of his emotions into that carving, allowing himself to forget everything else in the world and attain that most mysterious of states. Only then was he able to complete such a sculpture. For him, in his current state, to attempt to carve another sculpture of that level was virtually impossible.

"As long as you, Master Linley, are the sculptor, I'll be satisfied. I don't ask that it be on the same level as 'Awakening From the Dream', only that it is on the same level as most master-level sculptures," Cesar said with a laugh.

Linley nodded.

If that was the case, Linley had total confidence in his abilities.

"Mr. Cesar, how about this. I will produce the sculpture you requested in about a month. What do you say?" Actually, Linley only needed three days, but he wanted to give himself sufficient time.

Cesar nodded. "Alright. One month is a very short period of time. I'm not in a hurry. I have all the time in the world. Haha."

"Master Linley, if you have anything you want me to help with, feel free to tell me. As long as I can accomplish it, I will definitely do it for you," Cesar said magnanimously.

Linley couldn't help but feel rather nervous.

With Patterson killed by him, the only target in Linley's mind now was Clayde. To kill or to capture Clayde wasn't something which Linley was currently capable of.

But Cesar, the King of Killers, definitely was capable!

"Mr. Cesar, if I were to ask you to capture one of the rulers of a kingdom belonging to the Holy Union, would you agree?" Linley resisted the urge to be rash, and instead first sounded Cesar out.

Cesar was startled. He stared questioningly at Linley. "Capture a king?"

Linley nodded heavily. "Yes."

Cesar frowned. After a short pause, he looked at Linley. "How about this. Let me ask you something first. If I were to help you capture this ruler, would you kill him?"

"Most likely!" Linley replied honestly.

Lying to a 'King of Killers' would most likely be quite unwise. As for killing Clayde, if his mother really had died in Clayde's hands, how could Linley not seek vengeance?

Linley had a dark premonition. There had been no trace of his mother for so many years. Most likely, she was dead, or perhaps imprisoned somewhere. No matter what the case, he would seek vengeance for his mother.

"Kill a king?" Cesar looked at Linley.

Linley looked back with hope in his eyes.

In Cesar's heart, he understood that although in terms of status, a Cardinal was somewhat more important than a King, the impact caused by the murder of a King would be greater than that caused by the murder of a Cardinal.

A dead Cardinal could instantly be replaced by the Radiant Church.

But the death of a King would cause countless battles and strife within a kingdom. At the same time, the Radiant Church would yet again be unhappy with him.

“This request of yours... forgive me for being unable to fulfill it.” Cesar looked seriously at Linley. “Linley, the impact caused by the murder of a King is too great. And, this entire time, the Radiant Church has treated me quite well. I don’t wish to set the Radiant Church and my Sabre organization up as enemies just for the sake of a sculpture.”

Behind Cesar, the King of Killers, was the Saber organization, one of the four great assassin’s guilds.

Cesar knew what was important and what was not.

A single sculpture wasn’t worth allowing cracks to appear in the friendly relationship between himself and the Radiant Church. All these years, the Radiant Church had treated him with courtesy, something Cesar understood in his heart. He couldn’t be a selfish wolf who repaid the Church’s kindness by acting against one of their kings.

“Change your request,” Cesar said apologetically.

Linley suddenly felt powerless. Perhaps in terms of power, Cesar didn’t care about Clayde at all, but Clayde’s status had convinced Cesar to stay his hand.

Linley forced himself to remain calm.

“Mr. Cesar, I would like to ask, do you have any method by which I, a magus of the seventh rank, can kill a combatant of the ninth rank,” Linley asked.

Cesar glanced at Linley. After a short silence, he said, “I have quite a few assassination methods. But one which would allow a magus of the seventh rank to assassinate a combatant of the ninth rank? This... is challenging.” As he spoke, Cesar began to consider this question. In the mind of this ‘King of Killers’ who hadn’t killed anyone in a long time, one assassination method after another began to speed through his mind.

Linley didn’t dare to disrupt Cesar’s train of thought. He stood there quietly.

Suddenly, Cesar turned to look at Linley. “The combatant of the ninth rank, would this be a warrior or a magus? If this person is a magus, I have a method.”

“Warrior,” Linley immediately said.

Dealing with a warrior and dealing with a magus required totally different

methods. Hearing Linley explain that this was a warrior of the ninth rank, Cesar's head began to hurt.

Linley could only wait there urgently.

"Oh. I have an idea." Cesar's eyes suddenly lit up, and he turned to Linley. "Haha, a long time ago, I stumbled upon this method by accident. I didn't imagine that eight hundred years later, I'd still remember it."

"What method?" Linley immediately grew excited.

Heavens!

This King of Killers actually had a way for a magus of the seventh rank to kill a warrior of the ninth rank.

"The King of Killers is full of assassination techniques. Indeed, he knows far more than I do in this field. Although, if I lived for five thousand more years, perhaps I would still know more than him." Doebling Cowart's voice rang out in Linley's mind.

Linley couldn't help but force a laugh. Grandpa Doebling never liked admitting inferiority to anyone.

"The method is..." Cesar smiled at Linley. "Using poison!"

"Using poison?"

Linley was startled. He thought it must've been some sort of good method... but a king's food was always tasted and tested. How could using poison be effective?

"Master Linley, don't underestimate the power of poison. The art of using poison is an extremely deep, subtle method of assassination. This world is filled with countless ingredients, which can be used to make countless types of poisons. Who in this world can dare say that he knows all of the poisons in the world? Or that he can detect any sort of poison?"

Linley couldn't help but nod.

He agreed with this. For example, Doebling Cowart knew about using Blueheart Grass to counteract the forceful effects of dragon's blood.

“This poison that I’m talking about was specially designed for use against warriors. As long as the warrior is not at the Saint level, upon being affected by this poison, his strength will decrease by more than 90%. What’s more, to this very day, there’s been no antidote invented for this poison. Only by spending a year of time can one slowly use his battle-qi to purge the poison from his system.” Cesar clearly had a very clear memory regarding this poison. “And this poison is both odorless and tasteless. There’s no way to detect it at all. Only after having been poisoned would one realize that one had ingested it.”

Less than 10% of strength would remain? No way to test for it?

Linley’s eyes lit up.

Clayde was nothing more than a warrior of the ninth rank. Once he was impacted by this poison, based on Linley’s current level of power, wouldn’t he be able to easily trample Clayde into the ground?

“Do you have this poison, Mr. Cesar?” Linley quickly asked.

Linley could guess that this poison was extremely rare and valuable. That was without question. A poison which was effective against all warriors short of the Saint level, and which was odorless, tasteless, and undetectable, would of course rare and precious. If not, all the warriors in the world would be dead already. “Master Linley, didn’t you hear what I just said? This is something I recalled learning about eight hundred years ago. I just glanced at that recipe back then. After all, this poison was of no use or threat to me.” Cesar frowned. “I only know this poison was primarily formed from eight major ingredients, but I don’t recall the exact ingredients clearly.”

“You don’t remember?” Linley was so frantic, he could kill someone.

Cesar laughed towards Linley. “Master Linley, don’t worry. Although I’m not sure, the recipe for this poison was stored within my organization long ago. I can order some people to make a copy of it and bring it to me. However, the base of my Saber organization is in a place with very few people. From here to there and back, most likely it would take a month or two of time.”

A month or two. That was acceptable!

Linley nodded towards Cesar. “Mr. Cesar, might I ask if your organization has

any of this poison already in stock?” Linley didn’t want to waste time looking for ingredients to mix the potion.

“We do not.” Cesar shook his head. “In this entire world, perhaps only the Deathgod’s Hands has this poison in stock.”

“Deathgod’s Hands?”

In the past, while chatting with Yale, the topic of conversation had turned to the four major assassin’s guilds. These were known as Saber, Bloodrose, Scarlet Moon, and Deathgod’s Hands. Each assassin’s guild had its own specialty. The Deathgod’s Hands specialized in using all sorts of queer, exotic assassination techniques.

“Right. In the past, if it weren’t for the fact that the Deathgod’s Hands had a favor to ask of me, perhaps they wouldn’t have given a copy of such a precious recipe to my organization.” Cesar nodded.

Something which could kill virtually any warrior below the Saint-rank. The value of such a poison was unimaginable.

“Then... would it be possible for me to purchase this poison from the Deathgod’s Hands?” Linley said hopefully.

“Impossible.” Cesar laughed. “The Ten Ultimate Poisons of the Deathgod’s Hands is something they never give to any other organizations. The reason they gave us this recipe was probably because they expected that we would never actually use it.”

“Never use it?” Linley looked questioningly at Cesar.

“Because the price is simply too high. It isn’t worth it.” Cesar chuckled. “Two of the ingredients, in particular, have already been totally cornered off the market by the Deathgod’s Hands. The price of the poison would most likely be more than the commission of the assassination mission.”

Linley understood.

But to him, no matter how much gold it cost, it would be worth it.

“How about this. I’ll go back now, and arrange for some people to deliver a copy of this recipe to you. But Master Linley, a month from now, you need to

have my sculpture ready.” Cesar laughed as he spoke to Linley.

“Of course.” Linley felt a knot in his heart unclench.

After sending off Cesar, Linley, who had been worrying this entire time about how to deal with Clayde, finally relaxed. That night, he finally had a sound rest and a beautiful dream, something very rare for him.

That next afternoon.

Linley was calmly seated cross-legged on the grass, cultivating his Dragonblood battle-qi. That azure-black Dragonblood battle-qi in his body was constantly roiling about, as the unique power of the Dragonblood constantly was drawn deep into Linley’s bones, muscles, and tendons, causing his body to become more and more powerful.

Linley believed that if he continued at this rate, there would come the day that his body would be as powerful as that of a real, Saint-level dragon. He would resurrect the fallen glory of the Dragonblood Warriors.

“Lord Linley.” A female attendant’s voice from outside.

Linley took a deep breath, allowing the Dragonblood battle-qi to return to his dantian.

“Enter,” Linley said calmly.

Only then did this serving woman come in. Respectfully, she said, “Lord Linley, there are several guests from the Debs clan outside. They say they have come to thank you, Lord Linley.”

“Thank me?” Linley was momentarily stunned.

But then, Linley quickly understood. Clayde had given him face and freed Kalan Debs.

“Thank me? I’m afraid it isn’t as simple as that,” Linley said to himself.

There was a better than 80% to 90% chance that the Debs clan, seeing Linley help out once, had shamelessly come to ask for Linley’s help to save the Debs clan yet again.

“Let them enter.” Knowing of the existence of the poison, Linley now felt



much calmer and more assured of himself. With his mind relaxed, he now had the leisure and patience to pay attention to the affairs of the Debs clan.

“The Debs clan? Even if they aren’t exterminated, they’ll be totally beaten down.” Linley could already totally predict the future of the Debs clan.

Within the main hall.

Nimitz was the leader of this delegation. Kalan’s two uncles, Kalan himself, Rowling, and Alice were the members of this six-person delegation. No one in Nimitz’s delegation had dared to sit. They all were standing respectfully.

Seeing Linley walk towards them from afar, Nimitz and the others immediately smiled, and Nimitz even cupped his hands in salute. “Lord Linley!”

“I just finished my training exercises. If you could just wait a moment, I’ll take a quick bath and change my clothes first,” Linley said with a faint smile. And then, no longer paying any attention to the courtesies being paid to him by Nimitz and the others, he headed directly to another room on the other side of the hall.

Nimitz and the others were briefly stunned, but they could only smile and stand there, respectfully awaiting his return.

## The Trial

Nimitz, Kalan's two uncles, Kalan himself, Rowling, and Alice didn't dare to seat themselves with their host absent. They simply waited quietly in the main hall.

"Kalan, when Lord Linley returns, you must remember to be a bit more humble." Nimitz glared coldly at Kalan.

Kalan nodded. "Second Granduncle, I know."

In actuality, Kalan's heart was still filled with enmity towards Linley. After knowing the reason why he had been released from jail, he felt even more rage towards Linley!

"I would rather stay in that jail than have Alice go beg him!" Kalan's heart was filled with fury.

In the past, when Linley and Alice had been together, Kalan began to hate Linley. After he took Alice back, he felt a bit smug. In his eyes, although Linley was quite formidable, when compared to his Debs clan, Linley was not even close to being on the same level. But after just a few months, Linley's status had totally changed, becoming the brightest star within the Kingdom of Fenlai at one leap. Even his Majesty the King of Fenlai, and Cardinals of the Radiant Church, treated Linley with warmth. Even his own father acted so humbly towards Linley. All this filled Kalan's heart with even more hatred.

They were both young men. Why was he so inferior?

Especially this time!

He had languished in prison. Although he ended up escaping, it had required Alice, the woman he loved dearest, to go beg Linley to free him.

This caused Kalan to feel humiliated. He very much wanted to not accept Linley's kindness and continue to stay in that jail. How he wished he could

angrily curse at Linley, or even kill Linley!

But for the sake of the clan, he, Kalan, had come humbly to Linley's manor, and couldn't even act the slightest bit disrespectfully.

Footsteps could be heard.

Kalan immediately cast aside his angry musings. Forcing a smile onto his face, he made himself appear courteous and modest.

"Forgive me for keeping everyone waiting." Linley's clear voice rang out.

Nimitz and the others all turned to look. Clearly, Linley had just washed. His hair was wet, and he was casually wearing a loose robe.

"You can all sit." Linley comfortably sat down, gesturing casually with one hand.

Nimitz and the others all quickly expressed their thanks, then sat down. Nimitz was the first to smile and say, "Lord Linley, the purpose of our visit this time was to thank you. If it wasn't for you, Kalan most likely wouldn't have been able to get out this quickly. Kalan, hurry up and thank Lord Linley!"

Kalan was forced to rise to his feet again. Suppressing the anger in his heart, he forced himself to act humbly. "Thank you, Lord Linley."

Linley smiled at Kalan. "Kalan. No need to thank me."

"Mr. Nimitz. Very shortly, I'll have to attend to some important affairs. I don't know if you had any other purposes behind this visit? If you do, I hope you can speak of them now." Linley smiled towards Nimitz.

In truth, Linley simply didn't want to waste any time with these people. His time was meant to be reserved for training.

Nimitz was startled, but then he quickly adjusted. In a low voice, he said, "Lord Linley, our Debs clan has been framed and falsely accused of engaging in the smuggling of water jade. At this point, it's very possible that our Debs clan will be entirely eradicated. Thus, our clan would like to beg you, Lord Linley, for your assistance. Once our clan overcomes this critical threat, we definitely will not forget your great kindness to us."

As he spoke, Nimitz pulled out a black box from his side.

“Lord Linley, this is a very small gift from us to you as our thanks for your rescuing of Kalan. If our clan manages to survive this tribulation safely, we will once again show our gratitude towards you.” Nimitz sincerely held out that black box for Linley to look at.

“Swish.”

The little Shadowmouse, Bebe, suddenly scurried in front of Nimitz, and actually directly grabbed the box, then jumped onto Linley’s legs, planning on opening it up.

“Bebe!” Linley let out a low shout.

Bebe raised his head, staring at Linley unhappily. He didn’t open the box, only let out a few ‘hmph’ sounds, then fell silent.

“Mr. Nimitz, Bebe is rather naughty and mischievous. I’ll accept this gift, then, and offer my thanks to you.” Laughing, Linley put the black box off to one side, not even glancing at it.

Nimitz could sense that Linley was getting impatient.

Immediately, Nimitz glanced meaningfully at his companions, then was the first to stand up and bow. “Lord Linley, we won’t disturb you any further. This case involving our Debs clan will be tried a month from now. I hope that at that time, you can assist us, Lord.”

Linley casually nodded.

Nimitz and the others immediately left. That entire time, neither Alice nor Rowling had said a single word. Nimitz was the primary speaker.

Watching the group leave, Linley laughed coldly. “Nimitz, you old scoundrel. Did you think that by bringing Alice, I’d give you more face?” Linley flipped open the cover to the black box. Within it was a magiccrystal card and a letter.

“A letter?”

As he toyed with the letter in his hands, a burst of flame suddenly erupted from his palms, incinerating it and turning it to ash. Linley couldn’t be bothered reading the letter.

Time passed quickly. September arrived.

This entire past month, Linley had focused on his training. His strength, agility, and other aspects of his body had all improved. The Dragonblood battle-qi in his dantian had become more pure as well.

Linley had the feeling that he had reached the late-stage of the seventh rank.

As far as his growth in spiritual energy, although Linley's advancement rate was extremely rapid, even a genius would normally need around twenty years of training to advance from the seventh rank to the eighth rank. Despite his rapid improvement, a few months of growth wasn't very noticeable.

The path of the magus was indeed a long, difficult one.

Within the Hot Springs Garden, the shadow of a chisel could be seen, and a human-shaped sculpture was becoming more and more clearly defined. Bits of rubble flew about in every direction, falling onto the grass. Suddenly, Linley came to a halt, withdrawing his chisel.

"Whew. Finally done." Looking at the sculpture in front of him, Linley nodded with satisfaction.

This sculpture, which Linley had named the 'King of Killers', had truly cost Linley a great deal of effort. Each time, Linley had forced himself to totally enter the right state, so as to more perfectly carve out the statue of Cesar making his move.

The statue in front of him was as tall as a person.

Those two cold, calm eyes in particular gave people the sensation of being watched by a god. The aura emanating from this sculpture was the aura of a God of Death. Under the gaze of this sculpture, viewers would unconsciously feel a terrible, cold dread.

"Although this sculpture isn't comparable to 'Awakening From the Dream', it is the most perfect statue that I can make while in a normal state." Linley was extremely satisfied with this sculpture. He had spent an entire month on it, carefully, attentively sculpting. At last, it was completed.

Putting down his straight chisel, Linley soaked for a while in the hot springs, then put on a loose robe and sat on top of a chair. He was eating the breakfast which his attendants had brought him.

“Linley.” Doehring Cowart flew out by his side.

“Grandpa Doehring.” Linley looked at Doehring Cowart.

Laughing, Doehring Cowart said, “Linley, there’s two days left before the trial of the Debs clan’s case. Do you plan to go watch?”

“The trial?” Linley was startled.

This month, he had been absorbed in his bitter training. Linley had totally forgotten about everything else, including the Debs clan’s case. If it weren’t for Doehring Cowart’s reminder, Linley probably wouldn’t have remembered it at all.

“Yes, of course I’ll go.” A hint of a smile was on Linley’s face.



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Year 9999 of the Yulan calendar. September 9th. Within the Blackwater Jail of Fenlai City.

The Blackwater Jail was the most famous jail in the Kingdom of Fenlai, and it was the most securely guarded jail. The cases awaiting trial at the Blackwater Jail were also the most important cases in Fenlai.

Within the Blackwater Jail’s courtyard, today there were many nobles congregating. Even his Majesty, King Clayde, had arrived, and was seated to the side, watching. Naturally, Linley came today as well.

“Lord Linley.” One noble after another greeted him warmly.

“Linley, come, sit with me.” Seated in front, Clayde gestured toward Linley. Linley smiled at Clayde, then walked over.

Linley sat down next to Clayde.

Merritt, his hair gleaming, sat at the judge’s seat. His waist and back were ramrod straight. He really did give the impression of being fair and impartial. “Everyone, please sit.” Merritt nodded and smiled towards the noble spectators who had gathered here. In particular, Merritt smiled modestly towards the direction of Linley and Clayde.

The noble spectators all sat down quietly. Today, more than ten people had come from the Debs clan. All of them were seated together, nervously watching the proceedings.

“Bring Bernard,” Merritt ordered directly.

Very soon, under escort by two soldiers, Bernard was dragged to the court, hands and feet both shackled.

Merritt glanced at a nearby official, who quickly strode forward. In a loud voice, he proclaimed, “Duke Patterson, when he was the Minister of Finance, acted in many ways against the benefit of the kingdom. In particular, he is suspected of colluding with the Debs clan in the smuggling of water jade. The scale of this smuggling operation is larger than any since the founding of our Kingdom of Fenlai. We have already discovered that the valuation of the smuggled water jade was greater than fifty million gold coins!”

In actuality, the Debs clan had just begun their smuggling program. Although the valuation was fifty million gold coins, in reality, the Debs clan had only spent a few million gold coins thus far. From this, one could tell what enormous profits lay in the smuggling trade.

But just as their smuggling activities had begun, Duke Patterson had died, resulting in this being revealed.

The official continued, “Based on our investigations, one of the main organizers of this smuggling activity jumped into the river, while the other two were the brothers Lanseer and Langmuir.”

Finishing, the official sat back down.

Merritt looked at Bernard. “Bernard, do you have something to say for yourself?”

Bernard nodded. “Yes, lord, I do. First of all, it was not our Debs clan which engaged in smuggling. Secondly, the Lanseer brothers had been expelled by our clan long ago. Thirdly, the primary mover behind this smuggling operation should’ve been that person you said jumped into the river. There is no link to our Debs clan at all.”

Merritt nodded and laughed. “The organizer of this smuggling operation was

your third brother. And you say this has nothing to do with you?"

"Third brother? My third brother is still adventuring in the wilds. How would he have the chance to engage in smuggling?" Bernard continued to insist on this point.

"Your third brother is engaging in adventuring?" Merritt's face grew cold. "Then let me ask you, if your third brother is outside adventuring, then why, despite me ordering your Debs clan to summon him back, hasn't he returned after such a long period of time?"

Bernard said confidently, "My third brother is adventuring in other kingdoms. Most likely, he's travelled too far. It is normal for us to need more than a year to find him."

Merritt glanced at Bernard, chuckled, then said coldly, "Bring in Catson and the other two."

"Catson?" Bernard was suspicious. Who was Catson and who were the other two?"

Very shortly, three very cowering youths entered the court, falling to their knees immediately as they said respectfully, "Greetings, Lord."

These three youths clearly were peasants who had seen very little of the world before.

Merritt said calmly, "Catson, clearly explain what you saw happen."

"Yes, Lord," the leader of the youths said respectfully. "On June 28th, we three bros were fishing on the river, but suddenly, we saw a richly dressed noble lord clutching onto a dead tree trunk float by us. This noble was covered in blood and had already passed out."

Upon hearing these words, the expression on Bernard's face changed.

"The day that we pursued the leader of the smugglers was June 28th as well. As it just so happened, the leader jumped into the river." Merritt looked at Bernard. "Bernard, are you willing to admit guilt yet?"

"My third brother is adventuring in distant lands. He definitely wasn't organizing any smuggling activities. My Debs clan is definitely innocent."



Bernard still held his head up high and maintained his innocence.

Merritt laughed coldly, then said, “Bring Kanter Debs.”

Hearing the name ‘Kanter Debs’, the faces of Bernard as well as the members of the Debs clan present all immediately turned white.

## The Enormous Fine

“This Kanter Debs should be that third brother of the Debs clan.” Clayde laughed softly towards Linley, and Linley nodded. Linley and Clayde merely watched these proceedings, while the Debs clan’s members all felt terror.

All of those viewers from the Debs clan were now so nervous that they were trembling.

“Clatter!”

The sound of shackles rattling could be heard, as under the escort of two soldiers, a thin, ashen-faced, golden-haired middle-aged man entered the court. The gazes of everyone in the court were drawn towards him, including Bernard, Kalan, and Nimitz.

Seeing that golden-haired man appear, Bernard let out a long sigh, then shut his eyes.

“It really is the third brother of the Debs clan, Kanter!” From the watcher’s gallery, the sound of discussion could be heard. Many of the nobles present recognized and knew Kanter Debs, due to his position within the Debs clan.

By now, the Debs clan had no further hope of trying to dissemble.

Seated up in the magistrate’s chair, Merritt looked towards Clayde, who nodded.

“Bernard.” Merritt looked at Bernard. “As things stand, do you still have something to say for yourself?”

But Bernard didn’t look at Merritt. He turned his head to look at his third brother, Kanter, fixing Kanter with his gaze. Kanter, too, was staring at his elder brother Bernard. The gazes of these two brothers met.

“Third bro, why did you do this?” There was disbelief in Bernard’s eyes, as pain and rage caused his entire body to shake.

“I’m sorry,” Kanter said softly.

Bernard laughed bitterly, then shook his head. In a solemn voice, he said, “It isn’t me you should be sorry to. It’s the entire Debs clan. How many years has the Debs clan existed? It was only thanks to countless generations of hard work and effort by our ancestors that we enjoy our current level of success. But you... you...” Bernard was in so much pain that he couldn’t speak.

“Thud!”

Kanter fell to his knees within the court, and two streams of tears began to flow.

“Big brother, I deserve to die!”

He slapped his face severely with his shackled hands. Crying miserably, he said, “Big brother, I’m sorry. This is all my fault. I was greedy and wasn’t satisfied with that little bit of authority and wealth I had within the Debs clan. That’s why I used the clan’s gold to engage in this smuggling operation. This is all my fault. Big brother! This is all my fault!”

This scene startled everyone present.

Linley and Clayde both raised an eyebrow, while the sentencing magistrate, Merritt, frowned.

“Since things have already developed to this extent...” Bernard raised his head, forcing his tears to stop. He seemed very desolate. “Third bro, it’s no longer a question of whose fault it is. Your actions have caused our entire clan to be in danger of annihilation. I, Bernard Debs, as this generation’s leader of the Debs clan, will not be able to face our ancestors, even in death.”

As he spoke, Bernard’s tears once more began to fall.

Bernard suddenly turned to look at Clayde, kneeling in his direction. Crying miserably, he said, “Your Majesty. It is the greatest misfortune possible for our Debs clan to have given birth to this miserable, petty traitor to the kingdom. As the leader of the Debs clan, I, Bernard Debs, cannot escape responsibility. I, Bernard, am willing to use my death in order to beg you, your Majesty, to spare the Debs clan. After all, the vast majority of people within our clan are innocent!”

Clayde looked at Bernard.

And then he looked at Merritt, nodding once.

Merritt understood Clayde's intentions. Immediately, he called out, "Fifteen-minute recess! Fifteen minutes later, we will announce the final sentence!"



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All of the nobles present had to leave the court, and could only come back fifteen minutes later. The direction this case was heading towards had become very clear. As for how the Debs clan would be punished for its crime of smuggling, that was totally up to his Majesty.

Such a large-scale smuggling operation could definitely impact the entire clan. Even if the clan was exterminated, it would be understandable.

But of course, Clayde could also be more benevolent and merely punish the Debs clan but allow it to survive.

The result would be entirely up to Clayde.



\*

Outside the court, Duke Bonalt was chatting with Linley.

"Linley, did you see that? These main branch descendants of the Debs clan are really quite good. That Kanter had been captured quite a few days ago. But, instead of committing suicide, he waited until today to put on that show just now." Duke Bonalt laughed.

Linley nodded in praise as well.

"If Kanter had killed himself, then the Debs clan would be in an even worse, more passive situation." Linley laughed as well.

If Kanter had committed suicide, then his corpse would have been used as evidence proving the guilt of the Debs clan in engaging in smuggling. The Debs clan would have had no way to argue against it. But now, Kanter himself was

acknowledging that he had acted alone, giving the Debs clan a chance at life.

But of course, whether or not the Debs clan would live was entirely up to his Majesty.

“Kill’em, kill’em all.” Bebe, on Linley’s shoulders, bared his fangs while mentally speaking to Linley. “This Debs clan is too good at playing games. I, Bebe, can’t stomach them.”

Hearing this, Linley couldn’t help but laugh.

“Squeaaaaak.”

The door to the court opened. Fifteen minutes had passed. All of the nobles outside made their way back into the court, all of them quietly assuming their previous positions. Just then, the only people present in the court had been Merritt, King Clayde, and a few other people.

“Linley, take a guess. How do you think I will sentence him?” Clayde smiled towards Linley.

“No clue,” Linley replied succinctly.

Clayde grinned secretively.

“All rise!”

Saying these words, Merritt rose solemnly, and all of the nobles in the court followed his lead. His head raised high, Merritt said in a solemn, clear voice, “This is the sentence of this court: Kanter Debs, a member of the Debs clan, did flagrantly engage in the large-scale smuggling of a huge quantity of water jade, and is therefore sentenced to execution by hanging, with the sentence to be carried out on October 11th.”

“The total value of this smuggling operation was in excess of forty million gold coins. We sentence the Debs clan to receive a punitive fine of double that amount, eighty million gold coins. Bernard Debs is to be released. Court adjourned!” After hearing these words from Merritt, Bernard, Kalan, and Nimitz all let out a sigh of relief, but in their hearts, they felt very helpless.

Eighty million gold coins!

What a terrifying sum!

The entire net worth of the Debs clan was only around a hundred million gold coins, and that was including all of their illiquid assets. For them to be able to pay such a huge fine would certainly require them to sell off many of their illiquid assets. Such a large-scale auction, in turn, would definitely result in a great deal of lowballing and haggling from the buyers.

Although their illiquid assets were worth eighty million gold coins, the chances of them actually receiving eighty million gold coins was really too low.

“Linley, what do you think?” Clayde looked at Linley.

Linley laughed and nodded. “Admirably done, admirably done.”

The fine which Clayde had levied against the Debs clan was carefully calibrated, precisely because the valuation of the Debs clan’s illiquid assets were worth around eighty million or so. If Clayde really were to sentence the Debs clan to extermination, then without a doubt, he wouldn’t have been able to get his hands on a single coin of their liquid assets.

But if the penalty fine was too high, perhaps the Debs clan would even risk extinction rather than pay the fine.

The fine of eighty million gold coins was neither too high nor too little. It was just right.

“Father.” Kalan and the others instantly went to help Bernard to his feet.

But Bernard only stared at his third brother, Kanter. A gloomy, calm look was on Kanter’s face. He only nodded towards Bernard. After he had been exposed in leading the smuggling operation, Kanter knew that he would die, without a question. But now that he was dying on behalf of the clan, the clan would most likely treat his son and his wife well.

Bernard nodded towards Kanter as well.

Two brothers. From a single exchange of glances, they knew what the other was thinking.

“Let us... go back,” Bernard said with a sigh.

After experiencing this tribulation, the Debs clan had suffered a major blow to its vitality. At absolute best, they would have a tenth of the economic power

they previously had. From this day forward... the Debs clan had toppled from its previous position of power at the highest levels in the Kingdom of Fenlai. They could only be considered a fairly wealthy clan, now.”



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Within Linley’s manor, in the Hot Springs Garden.

Linley was seated on a chair, quietly staring blankly.

“Linley, what are you pondering?” Doebling Cowart came out of the Coiling Dragon ring.

Linley glanced at Doebling Cowart. Sighing, he said, “Today, when I saw the Debs clan be sentenced, I suddenly thought of my own clan. My clan was once a clan which dominated the entire Yulan continent, but now, after all these generations, who is left? My father died, and my mother’s whereabouts are unknown. Little Wharton is now in the O’Brien Empire. In the entire Holy Union, I am alone with no kin.”

Linley was gripped by a powerful, lonely melancholy.

His parents were gone, and he was engaged in a mission of revenge that couldn’t be revealed!

On this road to revenge, Linley’s heart was tightly spun up, and he didn’t dare to slacken off in the slightest.

Looking at Linley, Doebling Cowart felt a surge of pity. Although superficially Linley seemed very mature, and didn’t have any problems at all dealing with those important nobles... Linley was still only seventeen years old this year. He had just graduated from the magus academy not too long ago.

“Linley, relax. Don’t give yourself too much pressure. You have plenty of time.” Doebling Cowart encouraged him.

Linley looked at Doebling Cowart. On this lonely road he had been travelling, it was good that he had Grandpa Doebling with him, along with that mischievous rascal, Bebe.

“Thank you, Grandpa Doehring,” Linley said gratefully.

Doehring Cowart began to chuckle.

“I really want to know what happened to my mother as soon as possible. I want to kill Clayde as soon as possible.” Even if they ignored the fact that Clayde had abducted his mother, the fact that he had caused his mother to be separated from their family for over ten years, resulting in the death of Linley’s father, meant that without a doubt, Clayde had to die.

“Who knows when that ‘King of Killers’, Cesar, will bring that poison recipe.” Linley was beginning to grow impatient.



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Each day, Linley had been urgently awaiting the return of Cesar, the ‘King of Killers’. But each day passed with no news of Cesar. Time passed, and in the blink of an eye, it was now October. During this past month, the Kingdom of Fenlai had been fairly tranquil. The only major affair was the large-scale auction carried out by the Debs clan.

Many clans seized the opportunity to try to haggle with or lowball the Debs clan. However, the value of the Debs clan’s illiquid assets really were very high, so there were quite a few bidders from other clans as well. Thus, the price at auction wasn’t too low, in the end. The assets, previously valued at around eighty million gold coins, ended up selling for around seventy million gold in total.

After paying the fine of eighty million gold coins, the Debs clan could finally be considered as having escaped from danger.

But after this affair, the net worth of the Debs clan had essentially shrunk by 90%.



\*

October 10th was the day before Kanter’s execution. This day, Linley



remained in the Hot Springs Garden, training as he always did.

“Lord Linley, Lord Cesar has come!” A female attendant called out in a high-pitched voice from outside!

Linley had instructed that he must be immediately alerted if Cesar came.

“Cesar came?” Linley quickly threw on some clothes and immediately rushed out of the Hot Springs Garden. Given Linley’s current speed, in ten seconds, he arrived outside the main hall. Right now, Cesar, still dressed in those long, loose robes, was seated lazily with one leg crossed. He was drinking a cup of tea.

“Mr. Cesar.” Linley called out from afar. Three steps later, Linley entered the main hall.

Seeing Linley, Cesar’s eyes lit up, and he immediately rose to his feet. “Master Linley, my truest apologies for only coming today.” As he spoke, Cesar withdrew an envelope from his clothes. “Linley, this is the recipe I mentioned. It’s all yours.”

## The Bloodrupture Poison

Linley looked at the two female attendants outside the main hall. He called out coldly, "Leave. Without my orders, no one is to be permitted inside."

"Yes, milord."

The hearts of those two female attendants shook, and they quickly left.

"Master Linley, you are quite cautious." Cesar laughed.

Linley felt helpless.

Cautious?

How could he not be cautious? He was going to use this recipe to kill Clayde.

"This Cesar probably knew all along that I am intending to kill Clayde." Linley understood this point. Previously, he had told Cesar that he wanted to kill one of the six rulers of the kingdoms of the Holy Union. And then, he said he wanted to kill a warrior of the ninth rank.

As long as Cesar wasn't a total idiot, he would easily be able to connect these two points to understand that Linley wanted to kill a king of the Holy Union who was also a warrior of the ninth rank. In the entire Holy Union, the only one who fit these criteria was Clayde.

"Cesar, this old freak, wouldn't go curry favor with Clayde by selling me out." Linley felt quite confident.

What sort of person was Cesar? Would he deal with someone like Linley using tricks like these?

"Linley, you do indeed have to be careful. That person you intend to deal with is highly valued by the Radiant Church," Cesar said in a low voice by Linley's side. "And he has many guards as well. If you are to try and poison him, it will be quite hard."

Linley glanced at Cesar. “Thank you for your advice, Mr. Cesar.”

Poison Clayde?

If Linley was willing to risk his life, he definitely would be able to succeed. All he had to do was to invite Clayde to his manor, and then serve Clayde some wine. In his own manor, lacing the wine was an extremely easy task. But if he did this, he would be revealing himself as the perpetrator.

He had to find an opportunity to kill Clayde without anyone knowing about it.

Such an opportunity was quite rare.

“I can’t always rely on being lucky, like that time with Patterson insisting on meeting with me in secret,” Linley said to himself. That private, secret meeting with Patterson really was an unexpected, wonderful surprise for Linley, but such surprises could only be wished for, not relied upon.

As he was considering this, Linley opened the envelope.

There was a piece of paper within the envelope, filled with countless words.

“Drug name: Bloodrupture Poison

Ingredients: Astralagus fruit, white ginseng, turmeric, fog grass, cloud fungus, bitterskin, cardamon kernels, Blueheart Grass.

Effect: Bloodrupture poison, when dissolved into wine or water, has no odor and no taste. To this date, no way of detecting it has been discovered. Once it is ingested, it will seep into the blood and then into the dantian, preventing battle-qi from being generated, causing a warrior to have less than 10% of his strength left. Anyone below the Saint-rank is vulnerable to this poison, and there is no cure. Only by using battle-qi over a long period of time to cleanse the poison from the bloodstream can one cure one’s self.

Instructions: In order to produce one gram of Bloodrupture poison, one needs to have thirty grams of Astralagus fruit, twelve grams of white ginseng, ten grams of turmeric, fifteen grams of fog grass, twelve grams of cloud fungus, one gram of bitterskin, twelve grams of cardamon kernels, and one gram of Blueheart Grass. First use the twelve grams of ginseng, the fifteen grams of fog grass, and the gram of bitterskin. Place them into the alchemist’s pot and boil

them until the fog grass begins to emit whit mist, then stop. Filter out the concentrated juice, then place it into the mixing pot and add in the Blueheart Grass, the turmeric, and the cardamon kernels...

Storage method: \*\*\*”

This paper very clearly detailed every aspect of the manufacture and usage of the Bloodrupture poison. Just from examining the concocting procedures, Linley quickly understood how difficult it would be to produce this poison. If a single mistake was made in any of the procedures, the entire potion would be worthless.

The way to store it and preserve it was also very complicated.

The cost of a unit of Bloodrupture poison was more than a million times that of an equivalent weight of gold.

“Of the eight ingredients required to concoct this Bloodrupture poison, five of them aren’t that rare. Astralagus fruit, white ginseng, turmeric, bitterskin, and cardamon kernels. The prices of these five shouldn’t be considered too high for you. But the other three are very rare. That fog grass generally only grows in the far eastern plains, east of the Four Great Empires. It is extremely rare, and is rarely found in the marketplace. As for the other two ingredients, their rarity is even greater than that of fog grass!” Cesar explained carefully.

“Both Blueheart Grass and cloud fungus are virtually un-purchasable and cannot be found in the market, even if you have money. Supposedly, a while ago, someone tried to offer a hundred thousand gold coins to buy Blueheart Grass, but still was not able to do so. Cloud fungus, as well, hasn’t appeared in the market for a long time.”

Cesar patted Linley on his shoulders comfortingly. “Linley, it will take you quite a bit of effort to gather these eight ingredients.”

Linley still felt a degree of confidence.

Of these eight ingredients, five wouldn’t pose any problem at all. As for fog grass, even though it was rare, it shouldn’t be too hard to buy it. As for Blueheart Grass... he had it already. There was no need to buy it. Right now, the only problem was the cloud fungus!

“Once I acquire the cloud fungus, I’ll be able to produce some Bloodrupture poison. And that day will be the day of Clayde’s death,” Linley said to himself.

Linley could no longer endure any longer. If in the future, he still couldn’t find an appropriate opportunity, he would go all out and kill Clayde, even if it meant exposing himself as the killer. If worst came to worst, he would go ask Yale for help and have the Dawson Conglomerate aid him in fleeing from the Holy Union.

Based on the influence and power of the Dawson Conglomerate, it wouldn’t be too hard for them to help Linley escape from the Holy Union.

“Right now, what’s important is finding these eight ingredients.” Linley was still very happy right now.

At least he now had a goal to work towards.

“Linley. Linley.” Cesar called out to him. “Ahem, Master Linley!”

“Uh?” Only now did Linley end his pondering and turn to look at Cesar. “Mr. Cesar, is there something you need?”

Cesar chortled. “Linley, are you perhaps forgetting something?”

Linley immediately understood. Laughing, he said, “Haha, Mr. Cesar, you are referring to the sculpture, right? I finished the sculpture you asked for a full month ago. Come, please, this way.” Linley immediately led Cesar towards a side room.

In the corner of this side room, there was a man-shaped sculpture which radiated a cold, killing aura. Those two eyes contained within them a disdain for all life and an arrogance that forced viewers to feel awe and terror.

As for the facial features, the facial details were carved even more accurately. The sculpture looked exactly like Cesar.

“Wonderful, wonderful!!!” Cesar was so excited, he said the word wonderful twice.

“Master Linley, you truly are a master sculptor. In such a short period of time, you were able to produce such a flawless sculpture. In my mind, this sculpture is ten thousand times better than even that ‘Awakening From the Dream’ of

yours.” Staring at his sculpture, Cesar was grinning so widely that his face threatened to split.

The more he looked at this sculpture, the happier Cesar felt.

“This King of Killers is perhaps a bit too narcissistic.” Seeing the grin on Cesar’s face, Linley couldn’t help but think this to himself.



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“Lord Linley.” A nearby housekeeper bowed politely.

Linley pulled out a piece of paper and handed it to the housekeeper. “Go purchase these twelve ingredients for me. The exact amount I need for each is written on the paper.”

“Yes, Lord Linley.” The housekeeper accepted the piece of paper.

Of the twelve ingredients on the list of paper, six of them were the ones which Linley needed, while the other six were just some normal, random ingredients Linley had scribbled on as well. Of the twelve ingredients, only fog grass was relatively expensive. As for the Blueheart Grass and cloud fungus which the Bloodrupture poison required, Linley didn’t even bother writing them down on this piece of paper.

Linley wasn’t actually worried about these ingredients being made public.

After all, the secret formula for Bloodrupture poison was one of the secret formulas of the Deathgod’s Hands. Aside from the Saber organization, most likely no one else knew this formula. And there were many other formulas that also used those ingredients.

After all, Linley didn’t write down the two most critical ingredients; Blueheart Grass and cloud fungus.

“Find and purchase these ingredients for me as soon as possible,” Linley instructed.

After giving his orders to the housekeeper, Linley immediately sent someone to invite Yale, Reynolds, and George to come meet with him at his manor.

Whenever they had a chance, the four bros would meet and have food together, thus this wasn't out of character for Linley.

The next morning.

This was the day of Kanter Debs' execution by hanging, but Linley couldn't be bothered to go watch. He was in his manor, drinking wine and chatting with his three bros. Only after they finished drinking did Linley bring up what he wished to discuss.

"Boss Yale, there's something I want to ask you to help me with," Linley said.

"Third Bro, just let me know what you need," Yale said boldly.

Linley withdrew a piece of paper. "Boss Yale, I need two types of ingredients. One is fog grass, the other is cloud fungus. These two herbs are extremely rare, and are virtually unavailable on the market. I was hoping you could help me, Yale." Yale was supported by the Dawson Conglomerate, after all.

As one of the three great trading unions of the Yulan continent, the Dawson Conglomerate was a massive organization with astonishing abilities.

It would be much simpler for them to look for cloud fungus and fog grass than for Linley to do so on his own.

"Two types of herbs? Don't worry about it. I'll handle it for you." His tongue slurred from wine, Yale pounded his chest and promised. At the same time, he took the piece of paper with the two herbs written down on it from Linley.

"I've seen fog grass at home when I was young. It is a very fun type of grass. Under the hot morning sun, it will emit white mist," Reynolds immediately said.

Linley's eyes lit up. However, Reynolds' clan was back in the O'Brien Empire. From his clan to the Kingdom of Fenlai would require at least a year of travelling time. Linley didn't have that much time to wait. Only if he absolutely couldn't find it would he be forced to wait patiently.

"How long would it take us, if we were to wait for you to get fog grass from your home, Fourth Bro?" Yale snickered. "Third Bro, I'll go talk to my Second Uncle right away and have him help you find these two ingredients."

Yale really did handle Linley's matters with high importance. That very day, he

went to find his Second Uncle.

That night, within a private deluxe room, the brown-haired Myron Dawson was casually draped in a bathrobe. Bare-chested, he was lying on a reclining chair, while two beautiful young ladies were by his side, attending to him.

“Second Uncle, Second Uncle!” Yale’s voice sounded out from the other side of the door.

Myron curled his lips helplessly. Stroking the fragrant hair of the two beauties, he chuckled. “My dears, the two of you can go outside and wait a while.” Those two beautiful women left the deluxe room very obediently, and then Yale rushed in.

“Yale, you are already a grown up now. How can you act like this?” Myron Dawson said with a frown.

Yale chortled. “Second Uncle, don’t be angry. I’ve come today to ask for your help with something. This is something on behalf of my Third Bro, Linley.”

“Your Third Bro? That Linley fellow?” Myron immediately sat up straight. “Go ahead, what is it?”

Yale withdrew that piece of paper from his clothes. “Second Uncle, my Third Bro is in urgent need of these two types of herbs, which is why I’d like to ask you, Second Uncle, to help out and see if we can find them.” As he spoke, he delivered the paper to Myron.

“Fog grass, cloud fungus?” Upon seeing the words on the paper, Myron Dawson nodded. “I’ll send some people to investigate and see if there’s any to be bought nearby.”

“Haha, thanks, Second Uncle!” Yale was excited. “Then I won’t disturb you, Second Uncle, from your festivities. I’ll leave now.”

“You little punk.” Myron Dawson chuckled, then looked back at the piece of paper. “Fog grass and cloud fungus? What does this Linley need these two ingredients for?”





Linley had to admit, the Dawson Conglomerate was an astonishingly efficient machine.

“Third Bro, within the various branches in the Holy Union of our Dawson Conglomerate, we only have a small amount of fog grass. As for cloud fungus, we had some a while ago, but it’s already been shipped towards our headquarters. The headquarters of the Dawson Conglomerate is the place where we have the most herbs and ingredients. Here, let me give this fog grass to you first.” Yale directly handed Linley a pouch.

Within the recipe, the amount of fog grass needed was measured in grams, but the pouch which Yale handed to Linley contained nine full clumps of fog grass. This amount was more than enough.

“So there’s no cloud fungus available?” Linley accepted the pouch.

Yale nodded. “Third Bro, if you are in a hurry, I can have my Second Uncle send experts to ride flying magical beasts to head to our headquarters as soon as possible. Riding flying beasts is quite fast. From here to our headquarters, three months is more than enough.”

## Breakthrough

Linley was silent for a moment, then smiled and nodded apologetically at Yale. “Boss Yale, sorry for the hassle.”

“It’s no hassle.” Yale chortled. “It’s just sending someone to make a delivery is all. No big deal. Our Dawson Conglomerate often sends people to deliver letters to the headquarters. We’ll get several things done.”

Linley nodded.

“Third Bro.” Yale’s voice became solemn as he looked at Linley. “Tell me the truth. Why are you in such a rush to get these herbs?”

If it were someone else asking him, Linley totally could’ve lied and claimed that he was using it to make a medical lotion which would help him increase the speed at which his body gained strength. After all, it wasn’t unheard of to bath in medicinal waters as part of training. But facing one of his bros, Linley didn’t wish to lie.

“Boss Yale, right now, I can’t tell you yet. When the time is right, I will tell you.” Linley patted Yale on the shoulders as he spoke.

The bros of dorm 1987 had been together since they were young. They ate together, lived together, played together. They were as close as real brothers.

“Understood, Third Bro. But if you need anything at all, make sure you let me know.” Yale didn’t ask anything else.

The next day, Linley’s housekeeper brought over the herbs which Linley had asked for, except he hadn’t been able to find any fog grass. Based on what the housekeeper said, there was no fog grass available on the market at all. If they wanted to buy some, they would have to send someone to buy it from the Four Great Empires.

After all, fog grass was cultivated from the great plains to the far east. Some

of the market centers of the Four Great Empires fairly close to the great plains did have a small amount of fog grass for sale.

“Right now, of the eight ingredients I need to produce Bloodrupture poison, seven are ready. All I’m missing is cloud fungus.” Within his secret study, Linley had put all of the various herbs in front of him on a table, pondering what to do. Of the eight ingredients, there were three that were rare. Fog grass had been procured by the Dawson Conglomerate, while he already had enough Blueheart Grass.

“If I wait three months, then at that time, the people from the Dawson Conglomerate will come and deliver the cloud fungus.” Linley felt very confident.

At most, three months. At that time, he would have all the ingredients that he needed, and would thus be able to prepare a few mixtures of Bloodrupture poison.

But Linley wasn’t the sort of person to sit around waiting.

“Help me spread the word. Let it be known that I am preparing to begin a period of training with the usage of herbal baths, and need cloud fungus as one of my components. I’m willing to pay up to a million gold coins for it,” Linley instructed his housekeeper.

Although Linley wouldn’t lie to his bros, he had to give a good excuse to the rest of the world.

Cloud fungus, in and of itself, was not a poisonous plant. It actually was greatly beneficial to the body. But all herbs possessed their own wondrous properties. When these eight herbs were all refined and processed together, they would be able to produce a poisonous powder like the Bloodrupture poison.

“Yes, Lord Linley.” Upon hearing the words, ‘a million gold coins’, the housekeeper’s heart trembled.

To Linley, a million gold coins really wasn’t much. When he had auctioned off his sculpture, ‘Awakening From the Dream’, the price was twelve million gold coins. Afterwards, when Patterson had secretly met with him, he had gifted

Linley another ten million gold coins. After Linley's rise to prominence and appointment to the rank of Prime Court Magus, the Radiant Church, King Clayde, and many other nobles had all given Linley many valuable gifts.

And just a short while ago, the Debs clan had gifted Linley with a magicrystal card that had one million gold coins on it.

Linley's current net worth was well over 20 million gold coins.

And this wasn't even counting the Saint-level magicite core that Linley had acquired from the Saint-level Violet Tattooed Bear. That core, which Linley was keeping hidden, was a priceless treasure which probably was worth more than even a hundred million gold coins.

The news that Linley was seeking to buy cloud fungus for a million gold coins originally only spread amongst herbal merchants, but shortly afterwards, all the various nobles of the Kingdom of Fenlai learned of it as well. All of those nobles now knew that Master Linley needed cloud fungus.

If they could provide Linley with the cloud fungus, not only would they receive a million gold coins, they would also have a chance to build up a relationship with Linley.

Many nobles began to wrack their brains for methods by which they could locate cloud fungus.

But alas, cloud fungus was far too rare, and far too expensive.

After ordering this news to be spread out, Linley continued his life of solitary, pitiless training within his manor. In the blink of an eye, November arrived, and with it the temperature began to drop as well. The leaves of the trees within the Hot Springs Garden began to turn yellow and fall, filling the grass with fallow leaves.

"Haaaaa!"

Linley, who had been engaging in one-finger vertical push-ups suddenly exerted strength through his fingers, flipping himself into the air. Somersaulting easily through the air, Linley landed on the ground, his bare upper chest covered in sweat.

Aided by the Supergravity Field, after having trained for so long, even Linley's powerful body was beginning to feel tired.

"Whew."

Standing normally again, Linley felt the muscles in and near his fingers, arms, and shoulders all feel numb and sore. He found this feeling to be very comfortable, as he knew that in this situation, his muscles and bones were slowly strengthening.

The way to train one's body was to exceed one's limits time and time again, so long as one didn't exceed the limits by too much each time.

Seating himself cross-legged, Linley immediately began to train in accordance with the 'Secret Dragonblood Manual', allowing the liquefied Dragonblood battle-qi in his dantian to begin to rush out. In a short while, the mighty Dragonblood battle-qi had filled Linley's entire body.

Training, time and time again. Each time, the Dragonblood battle-qi would become a bit more pure, and Linley's bones and flesh would become a bit stronger.

The azurish-black Dragonblood battle-qi entered his dantian again, then spread out again. The dantian was the nucleus for a Dragonblood Warrior. Linley had reached the late-stage of the sixth rank long ago, and in September and October, he had reached the peak of the sixth rank.

Right now, Linley had reached a plateau. He could break through any day now.

"Crack. Crack." All sorts of strange sounds began to emit from Linley's body. Linley's muscles seemed to have a mouse buried beneath them, as they began to ripple up and down nonstop. Even his veins were popping out, and throughout Linley's body, beads of sweat and beads of blood were beginning to come out!

"I'm finally about to break through." Linley was shocked and pleased.

He had waited far too long for this day.

"Bubble, bubble."

That azurish-black Dragonblood battle-qi began to roil about strangely, filling Linley's entire body with pain. But within his dantian, that liquefied Dragonblood battle-qi began to condense itself yet again, increasing in density by several factors. The Dragonblood battle-qi was being drawn back into the dantian nonstop. And then, it would once again be emitted from the dantian yet again, forming a circle.

Whenever the Dragonblood battle-qi entered the dantian, it would transform.

After roughly an hour's time had passed, all of the Dragonblood battle-qi in Linley's body had undergone this transformation. Although there was theoretically only a thin barrier between the peak of the sixth rank and the early seventh rank, Linley's strength was now several times greater than it had been in the past.

Linley opened his eyes, a look of uncontrollable excitement within them.

"Haha, I've finally entered the realm of a warrior of the seventh rank." Linley was extremely excited.

As long as he were to agitate the Dragonblood battle-qi in his body, he would be able to assume the Dragonform. The training speed of the Dragonblood Warriors was extremely high, especially in the earlier stages. Linley had spent just about half a year before advancing from the sixth rank to the seventh rank. This sort of advancement was extremely astounding.

But Linley estimated that to progress from the seventh rank to the eighth rank, he would need several years, most likely.

The farther along one was, the harder the road would become. But nonetheless, most Dragonblood Warriors only needed a few decades to reach the Saint level in power.

Bebe, who had been sleeping nearby this entire time, opened his sleepy eyes, which suddenly brightened. Excitedly, he spiritually said to Linley, "Boss, you reached the seventh rank?"

"Yeah." Linley nodded happily.

"Then doesn't that mean, once you Dragonform, you have the power of an early-stage ninth rank?" Bebe was excited. "Looks like your power is gonna be

more than mine now, Boss!”

Linley began to laugh as well.

In the early stages, the boost to power provided by the Dragonform was quite dramatic. For example, as a warrior of the seventh rank, in the Yulan continent, he could only be considered an unremarkable fellow. But upon using the Dragonform, he would be an early-stage ninth rank warrior, who was qualified to be considered a notable figure in the world.

However, the more powerful one grew, the weaker the boost provided by the Dragonform would be.

Dragonform, after all, was nothing more than forcibly drawing out the Dragonblood that a weak Dragonblood Warrior hadn't been able to fully absorb.

“Early-stage ninth rank, and your Dragonform was influenced by the Armored Razorback Wurm. The Armored Razorback Wurm specializes in speed and defense, while you also possess strong defense and unquestionably high speed.” Doehring Cowart appeared from the ring at this time.

Linley was very confident in his own speed.

Because after taking on the Dragonform, not only did he have the natural high speed of a Dragonblood Warrior, he could also utilize wind magic and boost himself with a Supersonic spell of the seventh rank, which would increase his speed by a good amount.

Linley was so pleased that he just stood there, grinning stupidly.

“Boss, stop laughing like an idiot. Look at yourself, you're filthy. Take a bath, jeeze.” Bebe intentionally put a disgusted look on his face while covering his nose and jumping up and down as he bared his fangs at Linley.

Linley looked at himself.

At this moment, his body was covered in both sweat and blood. He really did look dirty.

“Splash!”

Linley jumped directly into the hot springs pool. The water in the hot springs

was constantly flowing, so Linley didn't worry about getting it dirty. After having experienced the sensation of his entire body transforming, then having the hot springs water rush against it, Linley felt so comfortable that he lay within the hot springs pool, eyes closed.

He fell asleep.

He felt so comfortable that he actually fell asleep.

Just as Linley was enjoying a beautiful dream, a voice rang out from outside. "Lord Linley. Lord Linley." The female attendant's voice clearly sounded rather anxious.

Linley's eyes suddenly opened. Hearing the voice, he couldn't help but frown. "Come in."

Only then did that female attendant dare to enter the gardens. Standing at the side of the hot springs pool, she snuck a few looks at Linley's naked body, then respectfully said, "Lord Linley, a herald from the palace is waiting outside. He says that he has come at the command of his Majesty, who is inviting you, Lord Linley, to make a trip to the palace."

"By command of his Majesty?" Linley hesitated slightly, then directly clambered out of the pool.

"You can leave now." Linley always dressed himself, as he didn't like the female attendants helping him dress.

"Yes." Her cheeks scarlet red, the female attendant quickly lowered her head and fled the Hot Springs Garden.



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Seated in a carriage, headed for the palace. Outside the carriage, aside from sixteen palace soldiers, there were sixteen knights from the Radiant Church. Linley's entourage was larger than that of even the Left Premier or the Right Premier.

"Lord Linley, his Majesty is currently within the East Flower Garden," the shrill



voice of the palace attendant rang out.

“Lead the way,” Linley said abruptly.

The palace attendant was very deferential towards Linley, smiling at him the entire way.

“Who else has his Majesty invited this time?” Linley asked.

“Just you, Lord Linley,” the palace attendant replied.

“Just me?” Linley began to feel suspicious, but he didn’t ask anything further. Under the guidance of the palace attendant, Linley finally arrived at the palace’s East Flower Garden. As it was now already November, there were very few flowers which were still in bloom. But the countless flowers in the East Flower Garden of the palace were still vibrant and beautiful.

And that ‘Golden Lion’, King Clayde, was currently chatting with his Queen in the garden.

“Haha, Linley, you came.” Clayde greeted Linley in a very friendly manner. “Come, sit.”

“Your Majesty. Queen.” Linley paid his respects, then sat down.

Clayde and the Queen exchanged glances, and then he grinned at Linley. “Linley, I heard that you have been looking for cloud fungus in order to create a medicinal bath for yourself?”

“Yes.” Linley nodded.

Suddenly, Linley had an idea as to why Clayde had specially requested his presence at the palace. But Linley didn’t quite dare to believe it. He was searching for this cloud fungus for the sake of dealing with Clayde. Could it be that Clayde was going to...

“Haha, I knew you were searching for this cloud fungus, so I sent my men out to do a search. By a stroke of good fortune, my palace storehouse just so happened to have a single clump of cloud fungus.” Clayde glanced at a nearby female attendant, who immediately presented a golden brocade box she was holding to Linley.

Linley was really, truly stunned.

The cloud fungus that he had been so desperately seeking, had been provided to him by King Clayde!

## Producing the Powder

Cloud fungus. The true reason why Linley was seeking cloud fungus was to use it to produce Bloodrupture poison powder. And the reason why he wanted to produce Bloodrupture poison was because he was going to use it on Clayde.

But in the end, it was Clayde who provided the cloud fungus to him.

“Can it be that hidden deep within the world, there really is such a thing as the cycle of karma?” Linley suddenly thought of the teachings of the Radiant Church, one part of which discussed fate. In the past, Linley had never believed in any religion, but this affair really had developed in a very bizarre way.

Given that the cloud fungus had just been delivered into his hands, how could he not take it?

“Thank you, your Majesty.” Linley smiled, bowing in thanks while accepting the cloud fungus.

But in his heart, Linley was laughing coldly. “Since you’ve given it to me, this means that the heavens themselves desire your death. You can’t blame me.”

Linley had virtually no memories of his mother, but that didn’t stop Linley from deeply desiring to have had a mother’s love. Due to never having known his mother, Linley had always been a bit lonely. Whenever he saw someone else’s mother and felt a bit unhappy, he would think silent, lonely thoughts of his mother.

Upon capturing Clayde, he definitely would be able to discover his mother’s whereabouts!

“Linley, I’ve invited the Right Premier for lunch today. Stay here and have lunch with us, why won’t you.” Clayde beamed at Linley.

“Yes, your Majesty.” Linley’s attitude was very humble.

The Queen nodded gracefully to Linley, then said to Clayde in a gentle voice,

“Your Majesty, you and Master Linley can remain here. I’ll go back now.” Clayde nodded calmly as well. In the Kingdom of Fenlai, the King’s authority vastly outstripped that of the Queen’s.

November. The temperature was getting cold.

But Linley and Clayde were both dressed lightly, not afraid of the cold in the slightest. Linley was now a warrior of the seventh rank, while Clayde was an even mightier warrior of the ninth rank.

“Your Majesty, why did you invite Merritt to dine with you?” Linley was chatting naturally and casually with Clayde.

Hearing Linley’s words, a very satisfied smile appeared on Clayde’s face. He glanced at the nearby palace maids, who very obediently left. Only then did Clayde say in a low voice, “Linley, are you aware that Merritt has recently married his thirteenth wife?”

“Thirteenth?” Linley was stunned.

He didn’t know that this apparently serious, solemn judge, the Lord Right Minister, was so fickle in love.

“His new wife is an extremely flavorful woman.” Clayde revealed a smile towards Linley, a type of smile all men understood.

Seeing that expression on Clayde’s face, Linley couldn’t help but be startled.

“Haha...” Clayde patted Linley on the shoulders. “Linley. Next year, you will be eighteen. Don’t tell me you’ve never tasted a woman before.”

Linley couldn’t help but feel awkward.

Clayde sighed, “Merritt, that kid, was actually able to acquire such an intoxicating little vixen. It really does make one jealous. But since I’ve taken a fancy to her, that intoxicating little vixen is mine. Merritt won’t even dare to touch her from now on.”

Clayde openly spoke of such affairs to Linley.

“Your Majesty? Is that... is that appropriate?” Linley was a bit surprised.

She was, after all, the wife of the Right Minister. But from the sound of it,

Clayde was going to directly seize her for himself.

“What’s inappropriate about it? Merritt only climbed to his current position through women to begin with. He should know very well what his place is. But Linley, that day when Merritt got married and had his banquet, I think you didn’t attend,” Clayde said questioningly.

During this period of time, Linley had been pondering the question of alchemy and herbal ingredients. He had no inclination to go to a wedding at all. Generally speaking, Linley declined all banquet invitations from nobles.

The wedding banquet of the Right Premier?

Declined all the same!

“Linley, how about today, during lunch, you take a look at Merritt’s new wife, Windsor. If you like her, I don’t mind giving her to you. I can guarantee that no matter how daring and audacious Merritt might be, he won’t dare to touch Windsor a single time,” Clayde said confidently.

Clayde possessed absolute authority within the Kingdom of Fenlai.

The day of Merritt’s wedding, Clayde had taken a fancy towards Windsor. That very night, Clayde had sent someone to bring Windsor to a manor outside, and he, Clayde, had thoroughly enjoyed himself.

As for Merritt, he didn’t dare to show any hint of temper.

What’s more, ever since that night, Merritt no longer dared to touch Windsor.

Some of the major ministers in the Kingdom of Fenlai had risen to their ranks through their abilities. Those were truly capable ministers indeed. But some ministers had clawed their way to their current ranks through some unsightly deeds.

Linley was secretly surprised at Clayde’s forcefulness.

But then again, Clayde, the one whom men named the ‘Golden Lion’, had always been as forceful as a lion. One could imagine how despotically he could act if he so chose.

“Your Majesty, Duke Merritt and the Duchess have arrived,” a palace attendant ran over and said respectfully.

“Haha, come, Linley.” Clayde immediately stood up.

Holding the packaged cloud fungus, Linley could only follow Clayde out. But shortly afterwards, they arrived at a very graceful, light-red courtyard within the palace.

Merritt and that Madame Windsor were there, waiting at the gate to the courtyard.

Linley couldn't help but glance at the Madame Windsor who had drawn Clayde's interest.

Madame Windsor's body was extremely slender. Although she was dressed very conservatively, her tight clothes accentuated every curve and every line of her slender body. Her waist was so slender, and yet her bosom was so full.

Her dark red hair was so alluring.

In particular, this Madame Windsor's eyes were soul-beguiling. Anyone who saw her would unconsciously begin to think improper thoughts.

“Your Majesty. Lord Linley,” Merritt said, and that Madame Windsor echoed him in her gentle voice.

“She really is quite an enchanting vixen,” Linley said to himself.

Clayde cast a delighted glance at Linley. In a low voice, he said to Linley, “What do you think? Do you feel a bit of an urge to...?”

“Your Majesty, let's go in and have lunch,” Linley said in a low voice.

“Haha...” Clayde began to laugh loudly.

That Windsor couldn't help but turn to stare at Linley with her beguiling eyes, seemingly quite interested in Linley. If Merritt and Clayde hadn't been there, perhaps she might have gone directly up to Linley and struck up a conversation with him.

“Wow, what a beautiful lady,” Bebe, on Linley's shoulders the entire time, said, his eyes growing round.

“Swish.”

Bebe actually leapt off of Linley's shoulders, landing directly... on Windsor's

bosom.

“It’s so big...” Bebe’s voice sounded out in Linley’s mind.

Linley was flabbergasted.

“What an adorable mouse!” Windsor excitedly cuddled Bebe, who used his little head to rub himself against her ampleness, seeming to enjoy himself very much.



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“Whew.”

Bebe in hand, Linley managed to finally leave the palace. This entire time in the palace, that Windsor kept on using her beguiling eyes to stare at him. Even Linley found it hard to endure.

They entered the carriage.

“Return.” Linley snapped an order to his guards, and the carriage immediately began to move. “Hey, Boss, what’s the rush? Right, didn’t that Clayde say he was willing to give Windsor to you? You should accept.” Bebe’s beady little eyes stared at Linley.

Linley couldn’t help but smack Bebe on his head. “You perverted little mouse.”

“Hrmph, I’m about to be of age, y’know,” Bebe said unhappily.

Linley didn’t know whether to laugh or to cry.

But thinking back to what he had gained from this trip to the palace, Linley couldn’t help but let a hint of a smile appear on his face. He took out the case by his side.

Within this case was a clump of cloud fungus.

“Now that I have the cloud fungus in hand, all eight ingredients are ready. I have what I need to produce the Bloodrupture poison powder.” Linley had already decided that he would immediately start to produce the powder when

he got back home.

“Boss, I feel like that Clayde is a rather brotherly, stand-up guy. Are you really going to kill him?” Bebe said in a low voice.

Frowning, Linley turned to look at Bebe.

“Bebe, Clayde is the ruler of a country. As long as he has any brains at all, he would naturally try to build a good relationship with me. He is friendly and does right by me, only because of my status and my potential. If I didn’t have potential, then Clayde probably wouldn’t even bother to notice me. Perhaps if I had a beautiful wife, he would directly take her for his own pleasure. Just like with that Merritt.”

Linley understood Clayde quite well.

A person like Clayde was actually quite heartless. But he could still be considered a capable ruler. At least, he was able to distinguish between capable ministers and useless ones.

“In fact, I even am beginning to wonder if, in the past, Clayde saw that my mother was beautiful and therefore wanted her for himself.” Upon seeing Windsor, Linley had thought of this possibility.

Based on Clayde’s personality, this was not impossible.

“Bebe, tell me, how can I spare Clayde?” Linley looked at Bebe. Just thinking about that possibility filled Linley with a boundless desire to kill.

Perhaps because he could feel the killing desire Linley was feeling towards Clayde, Bebe instantly said, “Kill him, kill him. I, Bebe, will be the first to act against him.” Bebe rose to his feet, waving his two paws around while baring his fangs, demonstrating to Linley the deep hatred he, too, felt for Clayde.

“No need for you to act. After finding out about my mother’s whereabouts, I will be the first to act,” Linley said coldly.

Within the secret room in Linley’s manor, under the light of eighteen lanterns, the entire room was bright. Linley was carefully following the procedures for producing Bloodrupture poison powder.

The procedure for producing this powder was extremely complicated. Each



step required caution, caution, caution.

If there was even the slightest error, then the ingredients would have been wasted.

Right now, on the table within the secret room, there were alchemist's tools, and the eight ingredients, all chopped up into many small pieces.

"Gurgle, gurgle."

Linley filtered the herbal juice out from the alchemist's pot, then placed this juice into a new, clean pot and began to boil it. At the same time, Linley began to carefully add the three remaining ingredients to the mixture.

"Can't get the order wrong. I should put in the Blueheart Grass, then the turmeric, then the cardamon kernels."

Staring at the alchemy pot, Linley focused all of his concentration onto it, carefully watching it for any reactions. Each step had to be controlled with extreme precision.

An entire night passed.

"I've finally produced a single liquid dose." Linley carefully strained the small amount of clear liquid out of the alchemist's pot, pouring it into a white tray.

"This translucent liquid seems to be just like clear water. There's no distinguishable difference at all." Linley sighed emotionally.

Based on the instructions for producing Bloodrupture poison powder, this final liquid dose could already be considered a form of Bloodrupture poison. However, only allowing it to dry into powder form would it reach its highest level of potency.

By now, this liquid dose had already been boiled once, and not much water remained within it. Most likely, within ten days' time, it would totally dry and transform into the Bloodrupture poison powder.

"The first dose was a success. Tomorrow, I'll make a second dose." Linley was very careful.

He didn't dare to use all the materials on a single attempt. After all, if he were to fail, it would be disastrous. By dividing the materials into multiple attempts,

at least a single failure wouldn't be too disastrous.

A single dosage of poison powder should be enough. But, to be cautious, Linley had decided to prepare multiple doses.

Year 9999 of the Yulan calendar. The end of November.

The six doses of Bloodrupture poison which Linley had produced had completely dried into powder form. Just by looking at its translucent, crystalline form, it was hard to imagine something which could so dramatically cripple the power of a warrior of the ninth rank.

"Whew. Although I've used up all my ingredients, these six doses of poison powder should be enough." Looking at the six packets of powder on his table, Linley let out a long breath.

For the sake of this Bloodrupture poison powder, Linley really had expended a great deal of time and effort. And now, he had succeeded.

"Now, the only thing that I am missing is an opportunity to make my move against Clayde." Linley couldn't help but begin to ponder a way to poison Clayde and capture him without anyone suspecting that it had been Linley who did it.

## The Scheme

This would be difficult!

If it was within the palace, Linley would have to first find an opportunity to use the poison, and then both question and kill Clayde within the confines of the palace.

“Even if I don’t worry about the issue of being discovered to be the murderer, upon killing Clayde, it will be very hard to escape the palace.” In Linley’s mind, one possibility after another appeared, then was discarded.

Linley finally reached a conclusion...

“To use poison within the palace and then escape afterwards is virtually impossible.” Linley discarded this possibility entirely. After all, there were simply too many experts in the palace. Only if he used the Dragonform would he be able to cut his way out.

But Linley was not willing to expose the secret that he could Dragonform.

“It has to be outside the palace.” Linley felt his head hurt.

A place outside the palace, where Clayde would be willing to be alone with him. And, the place had to be a standalone place. This was extremely difficult. Clayde was, after all, the king. If someone wanted to meet with him, they would go in person to the palace.

Linley couldn’t, after all, send someone to the palace and ask King Clayde to come meet him.

Linley had never heard of a situation where a subject would request a ruler to come see them. This clearly was unfeasible. Even if Clayde gave him face and agreed, Clayde would most likely be suspicious and on guard.

As soon as Clayde became on his guard, the chance of success would be lowered.

“I have to find an opportunity to be with him alone in a place outside the palace.” Despite having been in Fenlai City for so long, Linley had never been in a one-on-one situation with Clayde before.

Generally speaking, they would only meet at banquets.

But Linley couldn't make his move at a banquet, in front of an audience of countless people, could he?

“What to do?”

Linley was beginning to feel vexed.



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Early December. The temperature of Fenlai City suddenly dropped, and the first snow of this winter came as well. The entire Fenlai City was covered white, and the cold bite of the air caused many nobles to hide inside their homes, unwilling to venture outside.

Still dressed in loose robes, Linley was strolling on the snow-covered streets, escorted by two guards.

“Crunch. Crunch.” The sound of footsteps on the snow.

The snow-covered Fenlai City was exceptionally alluring. On the gates of the noble manors on each side of Greenleaf Road were countless icicles. The reflected rays of the sun glittered off of them, making them seem all the more beautiful to behold.

The towering, snow-covered pine trees in front of the manors seemed exceptionally beautiful as well.

The scene was a beautiful one.

But Linley's mood was foul.

“That Clayde is already a warrior of the ninth rank. Although advancing from the ninth rank to the Saint level is very hard, perhaps one day he will suddenly break through. By then, it will be even more hopeless.” Linley really didn't want to wait any longer.

The earlier he made his move against Clayde, the greater his chance of success.

But he needed an opportunity.

“Boss, look. Many of the nearby manors have been renovated and redecorated.” Bebe’s voice rang out in Linley’s mind.

While walking on the road, Linley’s thoughts were elsewhere, so naturally he hadn’t noticed. But upon hearing Bebe’s words, Linley noticed that the manors alongside Greenleaf Road were now different from before.

“This is...” Linley said questioningly.

“Hang it up. Good. Now move it a bit to the left.” A servant of the nearest manor was busy hanging up various decorations under the instruction of a nearby man.

“Those are... Yulan flowers!” Linley noticed the decorations hanging next to the door and what patterns they had. The patterns looked like Yulan flowers.

Suddenly, Linley understood what was going on.

“Right! It’s already December. The Yulan Festival will be coming quite soon. And it will be the 10000th Yulan Festival!” Linley knew the importance of this particular Yulan Festival.

Year 10000 of the Yulan calendar, January 1st. That would perhaps be the most festive day in the history of the Yulan continent. No wonder every single noble clan was putting up so many decorations.

“Crunch!”

One of the steps on a ladder which the servant was standing on while hanging up decorations suddenly broke. The servant lost his footing, wobbled, and then fell down, first banging against the ladder, and then slamming into the stone ground head-first, his fresh blood staining the ground red.

The nearby servants all were frightened.

“Are you okay?” All of them ran forward to help the man up.

“A bit... a bit dizzy...” That wounded man said in a weak voice. Fortunately, the

ladder wasn't too high, and so the force with which he struck the ground wasn't too great either. That was the only reason he had survived.

"Alright, that's enough for you for today. Go home and rest. Kohl, go take care of him. Jeeze, you weren't even that high up, but you managed to smash yourself this badly." The manager shook his head helplessly.

The servant named Kohl immediately helped prop up the wounded servant and began to assist him back to his home.

Seeing this, Linley was stunned.

"Lord... Lord Linley?" Only now did that manager notice Linley, and he quickly went forward to pay his respects to Linley. This manor was the manor of Duke Bonalt, and Linley had come here before. Naturally, this manager recognized Linley.

"Good morning, Lord Linley," the manager said with a bow.

Only now did Linley recover from his stupor. An excited smile appearing on his face, he looked at the man and chuckled. "Haha, good morning to you as well. Haha, alright, time to go home."

Excited, Linley immediately turned around, leading his guards back.

"Hey, why is our lord so happy?" Those two warriors began to chat with each other in low voices.

They had seen what a foul mood Linley had been in this morning, so what had suddenly caused him to be so excited?

"This method is so simple. Why didn't I think of it? Haha!" Linley couldn't help but slap himself on the head. He really had obsessed so much that his brain had gone bad.

Linley had already come up with a surefire method to bring Clayde to visit him. This method was... receive an injury!

"I'll pretend that when I was training battle-qi, I suffered some internal injuries by accident. If I'm wounded, from what I've seen thus far, Clayde will most likely come to visit me."

Linley was feeling unbelievably happy. As long as he made his move within his

own manor, it would be very easy for him to plot against Clayde.

“As for the status and wealth granted by the Holy Union, I’ve never cared too much. After I find out what happened to my mother and kill Clayde, I will use the backchannels of the Dawson Conglomerate to flee from the Holy Union’s domain.” Linley had already come to a firm decision.

The Holy Union held no attractions for Linley.

Right now, his one and only family member, little Wharton, was staying in the O’Brien Empire. There was nothing in the Holy Union preventing Linley from leaving.

To kill Clayde in a way which wouldn’t raise any suspicions was virtually impossible. Since this was impossible, the only choice Linley had was to accept that he would have to make a small sacrifice. To Linley, the Holy Union held no further attractions, after all.



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Linley’s manor. The Hot Springs Garden.

Linley was seated cross-legged within the grassy area, cultivating Dragonblood battle-qi. Like the ferocious waves of the ocean, the Dragonblood battle-qi burst forth, clashing against every blood vessel in his body.

In truth, the average warrior of the seventh rank wouldn’t be able to withstand such training. But Linley was different. He had drunk blood from a living dragon. Generally speaking, when dragon’s blood was applied to the outside of one’s body, it would acquire an astonishing durability. But Linley had actually drunk it into his stomach, which caused all of his blood vessels to also gain an incredible degree of resiliency.

“Paagh!”

Linley suddenly vomited out a mouthful of fresh blood, and his face turned white.

“Aaaaargh!” A painful, guttural roar ripped out from Linley’s mouth.

Right now, all of the female attendants outside the Hot Springs Garden could faintly hear that low roar of Linley's, and they all rushed against the door, pressing their ears against it to listen carefully.

"Lord Linley... seems to be in a lot of pain?" One of the skinnier attendants said questioningly.

"Seems like it." Another, chubbier attendant nodded.

But none of them dared to go inside.

"Lord Linley?" That skinnier attendant called out.

"Come... come in..." Linley's voice rang out.

Those two attendants exchanged glances, then immediately pushed the door open and ran inside. But upon arriving at the grassy area, they were both frightened. There was a large pool of blood on the ground, and Linley was collapsed on the ground, his face pale.

"Assist me to my room," Linley said in a low voice.

"Yes. Yes."

The two female attendants were a bit frantic. Each of them helping hold Linley by an arm, they immediately assisted Linley all the way to his private bedroom.

"Milord, should we ask for the light-style magi to come?" The skinnier female attendant asked.

"No need. My injuries are internal. Magic won't be able to help. I have to quietly recover." Linley took a deep breath, then assumed the meditation position on the bed, his eyes closing. "The two of you can leave now."

"Yes, milord." The two female attendants bowed respectfully and left.

Both the light-style and the water-style recovery spells were spells of a reparative nature, allowing physical wounds to heal. But to damage done to internal organs, they wouldn't be of much assistance.





Within Linley's room. Only him and Yale were present.

"Third Bro, you aren't injured?" Yale was confused. "If you aren't injured, why are you pretending to be injured? And asked to meet with me so urgently." Even before he feigned injury, Linley had sent someone to ask for Yale.

Linley said in a low voice, "Boss Yale, this affair has to do with my revenge. Boss Yale. I can tell you now. That Clayde is most likely the person who killed my mother."

"The person who killed your mother?" Yale stared. "Third Bro, you are planning to...?"

"Right. Get revenge." Linley didn't hide anything from his bro.

"That Clayde is a warrior of the ninth rank. How are you going to get revenge on him? And he's the king of the Kingdom of Fenlai as well." Yale was growing frantic with concern for Linley.

Linley said solemnly, "Don't worry. I already have total confidence in my ability to deal with him. However, after I kill Clayde, then even if the Radiant Church spares me and doesn't kill me, my life will most likely be made miserable. Thus I have decided that after I kill Clayde, I will immediately leave the Holy Union."

"Leave the Holy Union?" Yale was startled, but then he quickly understood. "Right. You do need to leave. Leave this to me. The mercantile power of our Dawson Conglomerate is spread over every major city in the Holy Union. It will be very easy for us to smuggle a person out of the Holy Union with no one the wiser."

"What's more, our Dawson Conglomerate has master disguisers as well." Yale was totally confident.

Linley knew full well how powerful the Dawson Conglomerate was. How could one of the three major trading unions of the Yulan continent be trifled with?

"I know. That's why, Boss Yale, I want for you to arrange for someone to wait for me at that hotel at the end of the Greenleaf Road. When I arrive there later,

you can help arrange for me to be smuggled outside the Holy Union.”

Linley was very confident that after killing Clayde, he would be able to easily make his way to this hotel.

“No worries.” Yale nodded.

“Third Bro.” Yale frowned, looking at Linley. “You have to be careful.”

Linley smiled at Yale. “Boss Yale, you must have faith in me.”

The news that Linley had been injured quickly spread out. The first to receive this news was not the ruler of the Kingdom of Fenlai; it was the Cardinal of the Radiant Church, Guillermo.

But very quickly, King Clayde and the various nobles of Fenlai received the news that Linley had suffered an injury when training. Although injuries caused by training were rather rare, they weren’t unheard of. Generally speaking, only someone who trained too hard and exceeded his body’s maximum limits would suffer such an injury, and sometimes even harm the organs. “The only thing to do now is to wait for King Clayde.” Wearing a loose robe, Linley sat on a chair in his bedroom, his face ashen.

Bebe was standing on a nearby chair as well.

“Lord Linley.” The female attendant from outside ran in.

Linley’s eyes couldn’t help but light up. But then, Linley immediately returned to presenting himself as ‘weak’. Looking at the attendant, he said calmly, “What is it.”

“Lord Cardinal Guillermo has arrived,” the female attendant hurriedly said.

“Oh?” Linley’s heart was suddenly gripped with worry.

Although Guillermo’s visit had been expected, Linley suddenly thought of something... what if Guillermo was present when King Clayde arrived as well? Then it would be very difficult for him to act against Clayde.

After all, Guillermo was a magus of the ninth rank. That Bloodrupture poison was used primarily against warriors to weaken their power, and didn’t have much of an impact on magi.

“Linley!” Just at this moment, Guillermo’s voice sounded out from outside the room.

## The Wine

Linley couldn't help but turn his head to the door.

Guillermo was there, dressed in a long, red robe, a smile on his face, his waist straight. His eyes, however, were very fierce and resolved. Under the escort of the two Vicars, Guillermo strode into the room.

"So Guillermo has already arrived. I hope Clayde will be a bit slower." Linley was filled with anticipation.

The only weakness in this plan of his was the possibility that Clayde and this magus of the ninth rank would come at the same time. After all, the Bloodrupture poison was of no use against a magus.

Linley immediately began to stand up. "Lord Guillermo."

"Linley, look at yourself. Your face is so pale. Sit, sit." Guillermo immediately took two quick steps forward to stop Linley from rising.

"Lord Guillermo, I'm fine. Although I suffered some internal injuries while training battle-qi, I can still walk and act normally. Only, it's a pity that for a period of time, I won't be able to train battle-qi anymore," Linley said with a long sigh.

"At a time like this, you are still thinking of training battle-qi?" Guillermo said angrily. "External injuries are easy to heal, but internal ones are much more dangerous. If you don't heal them properly, it's possible that they'll cause harm to you for your entire life."

"Thank you, Lord Guillermo, for your concern."

In truth, Linley had a very good impression of Guillermo. He couldn't help but cast a glance to the entranceway. "I hope this Clayde will arrive a bit later."

Yesterday's blizzard had caused Fenlai City to become very cold, and there were very few people on the road from the palace. But right now, a hundred-

man strong contingent of guards were currently protecting and escorting a lavish golden carriage out of the palace.

“Crunch. Crunch.”

The wheels of the carriage crushed through the snow.

“Ransome, open the door,” Clayde ordered.

The carriage was extremely spacious, and could easily fit five or six people very comfortably. This Ransome was one of Clayde’s personal bodyguards, and he immediately said, “Yes, your Majesty.” He quickly pulled open the curtain-door, letting in a blast of that frigid air.

But neither Ransome nor Clayde felt the cold in the slightest, despite the fact that Clayde was just wearing a jacket over some undergarments, while Ransome was wearing the traditional uniform of a palace servant.

“This Linley actually managed to damage his vitals due to over-training battle-qi. Jeeze.” Clayde couldn’t help but laugh while sighing.

Ransome said in a low voice, “That Lord Linley is still very young, yet he still has such accomplishments. No matter how talented a person is, one still needs to train hard. For a warrior to be able to injure himself internally due to over-training battle-qi shows to what extent he goes to when he trains.”

The limits to a person’s body’s endurance might perhaps be very high.

But each time one tried to stimulate one’s potential, one couldn’t go too far. Although it was true that hard work was beneficial to a warrior in training, one couldn’t go overboard either. The body wouldn’t be able to handle it.

“Right. This Linley’s future accomplishments will be unimaginable.” Clayde nodded as well.

Seeing the look on Clayde’s face, Ransome sighed secretly.

As Clayde’s personal bodyguard, naturally he had a deep understanding of his master. With the forceful personality that Clayde had, it was very rare for Clayde to be so courteous to someone. But towards Linley, Clayde had never stopped being courteous for a single moment.

“It’s a pity that, in that year, his Majesty... alas. His Majesty knows that he has

no hope of entering the Saint level, which is why he views Linley with such importance.” Ransome knew Clayde’s secret.

Although Clayde was a warrior of the ninth rank, Ransome knew... that unless the Radiant Sovereign was to bestow his divine power upon Clayde, Clayde would never be able to reach the Saint-rank, no matter what.

“Your Majesty, we have arrived at Lord Linley’s manor,” Ransome said softly.

Through the open door, the gate to Linley’s manor could be seen quite clearly. At this moment, there were two powerfully built warriors standing guard outside the gate. These two warriors were elite members of ace divisions of the Knights of the Radiant Church.

“Crunch.” The carriage came to a halt.

Ransome was the first to leave the carriage, then respectfully waited for Clayde to step out as well.

“Your Majesty!” Those two guards bowed respectfully.

“Oh, someone arrived before me?” Clayde noticed that there was another luxurious carriage stationed outside, along with a group of Knights of the Radiant Temple standing outside.

“Right. Lord Guillermo has already arrived,” one of the two warriors guarding the gate said respectfully.

“Lord Guillermo has arrived? That’s fine.” Clayde glanced back at his own squad. “All of you stay here. Ransome, come with me.” After issuing these orders, Clayde made his way through the gate, his personal bodyguard behind him.



\*

Right now, Linley was still engaged in conversation with Guillermo. Neither of them knew that Clayde had already reached the gate.

“This Guillermo still isn’t leaving?” Linley was beginning to grow impatient.

If Guillermo intended to keep on chatting with him like this, who knew how

much longer this would go on for? The longer this went on, the more complicated things would get. Growing anxious, Linley suddenly put a hand to his mouth.

“Cough. Cough!” Linley let out a few coughs, coughing so hard that his white face turned red.

“Linley.” Guillermo was very surprised.

He didn’t imagine that Linley’s injury would be as severe as this.

“Linley, you must properly use this medicine I have brought you. They have the effect of assisting the body in healing its internal organs,” Guillermo hurriedly said. “Your body isn’t in good shape right now. Get some rest. I won’t disturb your rest any further.” Guillermo stood up.

After coughing, Linley’s ashen face was even paler than before, without a hint of blood.

“Lord Guillermo, my sincere apologies,” Linley said apologetically.

“It’s fine. Get some rest. Your body is what’s important.” Guillermo reminded him yet again, before leaving the room along with his Vicars.

Just as Clayde and Ransome walked through the gate to Linley’s manor, they heard a voice call out from behind them.

“Your Majesty. Your Majesty.”

Clayde turned around questioningly, only to see Merritt quickly jump out from a carriage. “Your Majesty.”

“Merritt, you came as well?” Clayde chuckled, coming to a stop as he looked at Merrit.

Merritt ran to Clayde. Respectfully, he said, “Lord Linley’s been injured. How could I not come? Your Majesty, how could you go inside with just Ransome? It isn’t safe!” Merritt hurriedly said.

When a ruler paid a visit to one of his subject’s, usually he would bring all of his guards directly inside as well.

The first reason was to protect the safety of the ruler. The second was to

display the ruler's authority and power.

"No need. I'm just checking up on Linley. No need to raise the flag high and all that." Clayde chuckled. "Much less, within the City of Fenlai, who is capable of posing a threat to me, hrm?"

Clayde's self-confidence wasn't without merit.

First of all, Clayde wasn't worried about most combatants of the ninth rank. The only type of person which Clayde truly feared was a Saint-level combatant, but would a Saint-level combatant come to assassinate him, a king? What's more, this was Fenlai City, the Holy Capital of the Radiant Church!

Who would dare to act rashly within the confines of the Radiant Church's headquarters?

"Right, right. Your servant was being too cautious," Merritt hurriedly said.

"Let's go. We can go inside together." Clayde entered along with Merritt and Ransome.

"Your Majesty, Linley is currently recuperating within the private courtyard in the east wing. Allow me to guide the way." Escorted by the pretty attendant, Clayde, Merritt, and Ransome began to head towards Linley's resting area. But halfway there...

Clayde and the other two saw Guillermo and his two Vicars.

"Lord Guillermo." Clayde, Merritt, and Ransome simultaneously paid their respects.

"Clayde, you came as well." Guillermo nodded. "This internal injury of Linley's seems to be a heavy one. Just now, he was coughing. When you go to see him, don't waste too much time. Just see how he is doing, then allow him to rest."

"Understood." Clayde nodded.

"Then I'll leave now." Guillermo nodded as well, then led his two Vicars out and left.

Clayde went with Merritt and Ransome to Linley's chambers.

Guillermo's departure allowed Linley to let out a sigh of relief. But before he



had a chance to take a breather, a female attendant came running in to make a report.

“Lord Linley. His Majesty and the Right Premier have arrived,” the female attendant hurriedly reported.

“He’s here?”

Linley’s eyes lit up.

“I’ve waited so long. He finally came.” Linley couldn’t repress the excitement in his heart. “You can go now.” Linley immediately ordered the attendant to leave, and then he calmly stood up, quietly awaiting Clayde’s arrival.

Just a few seconds later, Linley heard the sound of footsteps.

“Linley.” Clayde’s voice rang out as soon as he entered the room. In three quick steps, he arrived by Linley’s side. In a very caring voice, he said, “Linley, your face looks terrible. Quick, sit down and rest. Have a good rest.”

Linley was pressed down to his seat by Clayde.

“Lord Linley.” Merritt was very courteous to Linley as well.

“Thank you, your Majesty. Thank you, Lord Merritt,” Linley said with a rather weak voice.

But the excitement in Linley’s heart was beginning to swell. In the past, after learning of his father’s death, Linley had instructed Hillman to take his clan’s heirloom, the warblade ‘Slaughterer’, to the O’Brien Empire. At that time, he had already made up his mind that the risk of death would not be enough to sway his decision to gain revenge.

Father. Mother!

His father’s death was linked to Clayde as well. If it hadn’t been for Clayde ordering Patterson to abduct his mother, how would his father have died in an attempt to gain revenge? And of course, his mother’s disappearance was Clayde’s doing.

“Your Majesty. I’m fine. I’ve just suffered some internal injuries, and won’t be able to train battle-qi for a while. I can still carry out my normal, day-to-day activities,” Linley said with a smile.

“That’s good. That’s good.” Clayde revealed a hint of a smile as well.

“Lord Merritt, you came as well,” Linley suddenly ‘remembered’ something, and exclaimed happily, “Right! I haven’t had the chance to drink the flagon of fine wine that you gifted to me last time, Lord Merritt. Since both you and his Majesty have arrived today, let’s have a little drink.”

As he spoke, Linley headed to the liquor cabinet next to him.

“No need. Linley, you’ve been injured. You can’t drink any alcohol.” Clayde advised him.

“It’s fine. My wound is just a light one. And a little bit of wine is good to get one’s veins active.” As he spoke, Linley plucked out four wineglasses, along with a bottle of red wine. “Ransome, you should sit as well. At my home, there’s no need to stand on so much ceremony.”

Linley knew a great deal about Ransome.

As Clayde’s personal bodyguard, he was an extremely powerful person as well. Although Linley couldn’t clearly determine his power, Linley was certain that he was at least a combatant of the seventh rank, or perhaps even of the eighth rank.

“No need. I don’t drink alcohol.” Ransome shook his head in refusal.

As his Majesty’s personal attendant, he had to maintain his wakefulness at all times.

“Linley, Ransome never drinks alcohol. No need to invite him to drink.” Clayde shook his head towards Linley. “Linley, when Lord Guillermo saw me just now, he said you were coughing hard. He wanted you to have a good rest. It’s best that we don’t drink.”

Not drink?

Nobody but Linley knew this, but the Bloodrupture poison had already been mixed in with this wine. If Clayde didn’t drink, how would he be poisoned?

“No worries. Lord Guillermo is overly concerned about my welfare.” Smiling, Linley poured everyone a glass of wine. “Your Majesty. This wine is exceptionally delightful. Lord Merritt, come. Let’s all have a toast.” Linley raised

his own glass.

Clayde and Merritt had no choice but to raise their glasses as well.

A light ringing sound as their cups touched. And then Clayde, Merritt, and Linley each drank the wine.

“Paaah!”

Linley suddenly began to cough violently again, spitting out all the wine from his mouth. The coughing Linley’s face turned a sickly red color again.

“Linley, I told you not to drink wine. You just had to drink,” Clayde said in dissatisfaction. He hurriedly went over to help Linley.

“I’m fine.” Linley smiled and reached out to stop Clayde.

Suddenly. Linley stared at Clayde. In a solemn voice, he said, “Your Majesty. There is a very important matter which I would like to discuss with you, your Majesty.”

“A very important matter?” Seeing the expression on Linley’s face, Clayde felt confused.

## Mother's Life or Death

Linley cautiously glanced about the room, saying in a low voice, "Your Majesty, just a moment. Let me order out the people who are outside." As he spoke, Linley walked out the door, then barked at the two guards outside. "Both of you, stand down. Without my direct orders, do not permit anyone to enter this courtyard."

"Yes, Lord Linley."

Those two guards saluted respectfully, then left. Now, the only ones left in this standalone courtyard were Linley, Clayde, Merritt, and Ransome.

"Creaaak." Linley quietly shut the door.

"Linley, what sort of secret is this, that you even close the door?" Clayde chuckled.

Linley glanced at Clayde, laughing coldly in his heart. He himself knew that Clayde had already been poisoned by the Bloodrupture poison. As the Bloodrupture poison didn't actually cause any damage to the body, just prevent the generation of battle-qi, it was only after a person attempted to generate battle-qi that they would discover that they had been poisoned.

"This affair really is quite important." Linley's face was solemn.

At this time, Ransome subtly moved closer towards Clayde. As the personal bodyguard of the king, Ransome was beginning to feel that this environment was vaguely dangerous. At the same time, Ransome also felt that as Clayde was a warrior of the ninth rank, and he Ransome was a warrior of the eighth rank, by all rights, nobody here should be capable of being a threat to them.

But one could never be too careful.

"Your Majesty." Linley stared solemnly at Clayde. "My mother left this world when I was young."

Clayde nodded. He had investigated Linley's background, and had discovered that Linley's mother had died in childbirth, while giving birth to Linley's younger brother, Wharton.

"I have no memories of receiving motherly love, only of the strictness of my father. My father was quite severe towards me in terms of both warrior training as well as all the education which nobles were expected to have. My father's requirements for me were very high and very strict."

Linley looked at Clayde as he spoke slowly.

Clayde was beginning to be confused. He didn't understand what any of this had to do with the so-called 'important matter' which Linley had mentioned. But as the ruler of the kingdom, Clayde showed a kingly poise and didn't interrupt.

"Your Majesty, I expect that you know that my clan, the Baruch clan, is also the clan of the Dragonblood Warriors." A slightly proud look was on Linley's face.

"That's right. One of the Four Supreme Warrior clans, the Dragonblood Warrior clan. This is an illustrious, ancient lineage." Clayde sighed with praise.

Linley shook his head. "We were only illustrious in the past. My clan had fallen so far that even our ancestral heirloom had been lost for hundreds of years. Each and every generation of Baruch clan leaders had desired to seize back this heirloom for centuries, but this never occurred. Your Majesty, when I was accepted by the Ernst Institute and left home, do you know what my father said to me the day I left?"

"What did he say?" Clayde looked at Linley.

"My father said, if in the future I do not bring back the ancestral heirloom of our clan, even in his death, he wouldn't forgive me!" Linley's body was trembling slightly.

Clayde, Merritt, and even Ransome all stared in amazement. A father could actually say such a thing to his son? "Your father went a bit too far," Clayde said.

"No."

Linley shook his head solemnly. “I understand my father’s desire. My Dragonblood Warrior clan had been downtrodden for centuries, without a single truly powerful person appearing in all that time. My father understood that I would be the strongest person my clan had produced in centuries. Hundreds of years of hopes and desires all rested on my shoulders. Tell me, how could my father permit me to be a failure?” Clayde began to understand.

“My father’s lifelong desire was to bring the warblade ‘Slaughterer’ back to the clan.” Linley’s voice was growing fierce. “At the Ernst Institute, I didn’t dare to slacken off in the slightest. I trained like mad. I always remembered my father’s wish, my father’s instructions!”

Clayde and the others were beginning to understand Linley’s motivations.

“Half a year ago, after I auctioned off ‘Awakening From the Dream’, I went back home, and that time, I brought the warblade ‘Slaughterer’ with me.” Linley’s voice rose to a higher timbre.

Clayde, Ransome, and Merritt were stunned.

Because they all knew that on that trip, Linley had found that his father had already passed away.

“But when I excitedly returned home, I was welcomed by the news of my father’s death. Before he died, he didn’t have a chance to see the warblade, and I didn’t have a chance to see my father one last time either. All those years of hard work, my dream of making my father happy... unfortunately...” All the muscles on Linley’s face were twitching, and the expression on his face was terrifying to behold.

Clayde and the others could all understand how Linley was feeling.

“Linley, don’t be too heartbroken,” Clayde sighed.

Linley sneered. “But, do you know why or how my father died?”

Clayde, Merritt, and Ransome were all startled.

“My father was killed, your Majesty, by your younger brother, Duke Patterson!!!!” Linley’s eyes began to turn red.

“What?!” Clayde rose to his feet in shock. By his side, Merritt and Ransome

were both stunned as well.

“Therefore... I killed Patterson!” Linley’s voice was very sinister.

At this point in time, Ransome was the first to feel that something was very wrong in this room. He vigilantly inched closer to Clayde, guarding against Linley’s actions. But suddenly, just at this moment, Ransome felt a gust of wind from behind. Ransome, a warrior of the eighth rank, knew that he wouldn’t have time to turn his head, and so his only choice was to swing his arm behind him in defense.

“Crunch!”

An incredibly painful feeling... and then, Ransome could no longer feel his arm’s existence. Only now did Ransome notice, from the corner of his eyes...

A rat-like magical beast, nearly half a meter long, was standing beside him. Aside from noticing the rat’s blood-covered maw, Ransome also noticed its sharp claws moving extremely fast towards him. At such a close distance, Ransome didn’t have any chance of dodging at all.

It was too fast!

“Snick.”

The sharp claws split apart Ransome’s throat. Ransome stared in astonishment, but gradually, the life faded away from his eyes.

He simply couldn’t understand where this half-meter-long rodent-type magical beast had come from. The first thing he had done when he had entered the room was to scan it carefully. He only noticed a small Shadowmouse on the ground which was the size of a man’s palm.

Could a palm-sized Shadowmouse pose a threat?

To a warrior of the eighth rank, not at all. Ransome thus wasn’t on his guard against it at all.

And thus, being caught totally off-guard, this warrior of the eighth rank, Ransome, was easily killed by the Shadowmouse, Bebe. In truth, his death wasn’t too unjust. Given Bebe’s current power, even if Ransome had been able to fight him openly and fairly, he still probably wouldn’t have been able to hold

on for too long.

“Ransome.” Clayde and Merritt were both shocked.

A stately warrior of the eighth rank died in one action. The two of them stared in shock at that Shadowmouse. Before their very eyes, Bebe’s body shrank down, returning to a fist-sized state, then leaping back onto Linley’s shoulders.

“Bebe. Well done.” Linley rubbed Bebe’s little head.

Bebe closed his eyes, luxuriating in the feeling.

Linley turned his head to once more stare at Clayde. That cold look in his eyes made Clayde feel very uneasy.

“Linley, what do you think you are doing?” Clayde barked coldly. At the same time, he began to activate the battle-qi in his body. But at that moment, Clayde suddenly felt that those wide open blood vessels in his body had suddenly been stopped up by something.

Based on the dense battle-qi that Clayde possessed as a warrior of the ninth rank, in the past, the flow of his battle-qi was as powerful and forceful as the crushing waves of the sea. But now, he was only able to forcibly activate a tiny amount of battle-qi, and sometimes the flow would break entirely. Right now, the amount of battle-qi available to Clayde was perhaps only one percent of what was normally available to him.

“Your Majesty, don’t shout and don’t resist. If you resist, you die,” Linley said calmly.

Clayde instantly realized what sort of situation he was now in.

Right now, just based on his muscle power, he could perhaps compete against a warrior of the seventh rank. But that little Shadowmouse on Linley’s shoulders was capable of killing even a warrior of the eighth rank like Ransome in a flash.

Clayde didn’t doubt in the slightest that Linley and his little Shadowmouse had the power to kill him in an instant.

“Linley, how dare you! You dare to attempt to assassinate his Majesty?” Terrified out of his mind, Merritt shouted.

“Shut your mouth.” Linley cast a frozen glance at Merritt.



Merritt's muscle strength wasn't that powerful. Now that he was virtually unable to activate his battle-qi, he could perhaps be comparable at most to a normal warrior of the fourth rank.

Merritt quickly understood the situation as well. Not daring to shout at Linley, he still tried to persuade him. "Linley, you have a great future and lots of potential. In the future, you'll be a high-level official within the Radiant Church, and perhaps one day you'll even be the next Holy Emperor. Why must you destroy your future prospects? Linley, I trust that his Majesty won't blame you for having killed Patterson. He brought calamity upon himself when he acted against your father." As he spoke, Merritt glanced at Clayde.

Clayde nodded as well. "Linley, I am willing to pretend that nothing happened today. As for Patterson, he's already dead."

"Linley, his Majesty has already spoken. Don't act too rashly," Merritt hurriedly said.

"Shut your mouth!" Linley suddenly stretched his arm out.

Like iron claws, Linley's right hand stretched out and grabbed Merritt by the throat, suddenly raising him up in the air.

"Ah! Ah! Ah!" Merritt stared at Linley, terrified, gurgling out his pleas.

"Linley," Clayde immediately called out.

But with a cold laugh, Linley flexed his fingers, and then let his hand relax.

"Crunch!" With a snapping sound, Merritt fell to the floor. He grabbed his throat, just barely managing to force out an 'ah' 'ah' sound. In the moments just before his death, he still couldn't believe what had happened. He had come to visit today alongside King Clayde, and yet, this was the result.

As he died, Merritt's life began to flash before his eyes. The last thing he thought of... was a woman.

"If I had known that I would die in Linley's hands, then... that day... I shouldn't have let Alice slip through my fingers." This was the last thought Merritt ever had.

Linley was smiling coldly at Clayde.

“Linley, why are you acting against me? I seem to have treated you quite well.” Clayde looked at Linley, but at this moment, Clayde was hoping to himself: “Snow Lion, bring someone, quick, quick!” As a warrior of the ninth rank, Clayde had a magical beast companion of his own.

The Snow Lion was a Glacial Snow Lion, an eighth-ranked magical beast who came from the far north. Generally speaking, it would remain in the palace.

Because of the soul-binding contract which bound them, the minds of the Snow Lion and Clayde were linked. Thus, the Snow Lion immediately knew that Clayde had been a victim of an ambush. Clayde knew very well that right now... his priority was to delay, delay as long as he could!

“True, you have treated me well! But what about my mother?” Linley stared death at Clayde.

If it hadn't been for the fact that in the past, Clayde had ordered the abduction of Linley's mother, Linley's father would still be alive, and his mother would be at home as well. His parents would still be alive! But because of Clayde's actions, he had lost both parents.

“Mother? Didn't your mother die in childbirth?” Clayde didn't understand.

“Die in childbirth?” Linley laughed loudly, his voice wild. And then he stared coldly at Clayde. “That was just a cover story that we made up. Clayde, after my mother gave birth to my little brother, my father and her went to the Radiant Temple to pray. But that night, upon returning to their hotel, they were attacked and my mother was captured.”

“Clayde, could it be that you have forgotten that twelve years ago, you ordered Patterson to have kidnappers abduct my mother?” Linley stared coldly at Clayde. “Don't deny it. Patterson has already told me everything.”

“That... that was your mother?!” Clayde was totally shocked.

“What, you remember now?” Linley's eyes were boiling with fury. “Tell me. What happened to my mother? Tell me, is she alive, or is she dead?”

Clayde said calmly, “Your mother, I handed over to another person. You can't afford to offend that person. Neither can I.”

“Another person?” Linley totally didn’t understand.

But at the same time, Linley felt a thread of hope in his heart. A person that even Clayde couldn’t afford to offend had abducted his mother. There had to be an important reason behind it. Perhaps... his mother was still alive.

Clayde laughed coldly. “But I can tell you one thing. Your mother is dead. Without question, she is dead!”

“No...” Linley stared.

“You don’t believe me?” Despite the situation he was in, Clayde began to laugh.

## Kill However Many Come!

Within the palace.

The Glacial Snow Lion that Clayde had tamed had ten or so servants dedicated solely to his maintenance. After having tended him for so long, the Glacial Snow Lion's attendants could already guess what the Glacial Snow Lion was saying when it roared.

"Where's the Snow Lion?" A white-robed male palace attendant said in a high-pitched voice.

"Milord, the Snow Lion is currently asleep," one of the Glacial Snow Lion's attendants said respectfully.

"Mm." The palace attendant nodded arrogantly.

"Roar! Roar!" Suddenly, a series of ferocious roars could be heard. The roars sounded frantic and worried.

Hearing the sound, the face of the attendant responsible for tending the Glacial Snow Lion instantly changed. The white-robed palace attendant was even more worried. He asked, "What's going on? What's wrong with the Snow Lion?"

Roaring furiously, the Snow Lion quickly charged forwards to them.

"His Majesty, his Majesty is in danger!" The servant charged with tending the Snow Lion was frantic. "Quick! Ten years ago, this happened once as well. His Majesty must be in grave danger! Quick, quick, go protect his Majesty! Milord, where is his Majesty right now?"

The expression on the face of the white-robed palace attendant changed as well. "His Majesty, his Majesty left the palace. Right. He went to Lord Linley's manor."

"Quick, quick, go protect his Majesty!" The attendant bellowed.

At the same time, the attendant directly leapt onto the Snow Lion's back. After having spent every day feeding the Snow Lion, the creature held very little animosity towards him and was willing to let him ride atop itself. Just at this moment, five shadows suddenly flew over as well. These were five of the top experts of the palace.

"Snow Lion, is his Majesty in danger?" A golden-haired middle-aged man barked out to the Glacial Snow Lion.

The Snow Lion continued to bellow while nodding at the same time.

"Quick, to Lord Linley's manor. His Majesty is there," a jade-haired expert quickly said.

"Fourth Bro, you go find Lord Kaiser," the golden-haired middle-aged man shouted.

Lord Kaiser was the leader of these experts, and one of the most powerful combatants of the Kingdom of Fenlai. There were only a total of two combatants of the ninth level who had pledged loyalty to the Kingdom of Fenlai, with one being King Clayde himself, and the other being this Lord Kaiser.

Because of Lord Kaiser's high status, there was no need for him to live long-term in the palace.

"Yes, Second Bro! You go protect his Majesty. I'll find Lord Kaiser." The jade-haired man immediately sped off.

"Snow Lion, let's go."

The four of them immediately sped off with the Snow Lion in the direction of Linley's manor.

Within Linley's manor. Right now, within Linley's 'recuperation' courtyard, aside from two corpses, only Linley and Clayde were present.

"No... how do you know that my mother is dead? Didn't you say you gave my mother to another person, a person even you dared not offend? I don't believe that a person like that would abduct my mother just for the purpose of killing her." Linley refused to believe it.

His father was already dead. Linley didn't want for his mother to be dead as

well.

Deep in his heart, Linley thirsted for his family to be alive!

“Haha...” Clayde began to laugh while looking at Linley with pity in his eyes. “Linley, I can tell you clearly, right now, that person didn’t instruct me to abduct your mother for him. I did it on my own initiative, abducting your mother, then gifting her to him. Because I knew... he really needed women like her.”

“And I also know very well that in the past, this lord had acquired quite a few women like your mother. And all of them, without exception. Perished.” A hint of mad laughter was in Clayde’s eyes.

Linley seemed to have been hit by a bolt of lightning. His body swayed.

“Without exception?” Linley stared at Clayde.

Clayde looked at Linley with pity in his eyes. “Linley, you should’ve had an extremely resplendent future. But you insisted on choosing this path. Since you’ve already chosen this path, your future has now been determined as well.”

“Haha... hahahahahahaha!” Linley suddenly began to laugh loudly, all of the muscles on his face twitching.

Linley stared at Clayde with eyes like death. “Clayde. It was you. You were the one who harmed my mother, and in the end caused my father to die. If it wasn’t for you, I probably would be enjoying a wonderful life with my parents right now. It was you. It was all you. It was you who ruined—”

Linley’s hand stretched out, grabbing a straight chisel by his side.

“What are you planning to do?” Clayde stared at Linley with his tiger-like eyes.

“What am I going to do?” Linley stared at the straight chisel in his hands. “In the past, I always engaged in stone sculpting. But today... I want to try flesh sculpting.” Linley’s eyes had already begun to turn a dark, gold color, just like those eyes of the Armored Razorback Wyrms. Heartless. Cold!

Within the Coiling Dragon ring, Doehring Cowart continued to maintain his silence.

Having watched Linley grow up, Doehring Cowart understood Linley very well.

Linley deeply valued his family and his bros. For the sake of his family and his bros, Linley wouldn't fear death. Right now, the man responsible for the deaths of his mother and father were right in front of him. It was impossible for Linley to remain calm at a time like this.

"Flesh sculpting?" Clayde was startled. Linley's gaze was fierce, and he carefully inspected Clayde's entire body. "Don't worry. You have such a strong, powerful body. I am confident that I will be able to slice you a thousand times before I let you die, as a woman." Linley's voice was freezing cold, and the murderous aura rolled from him in waves.

"You!" Clayde's face turned icy cold as well, and he viciously snarled, "Linley, I will definitely kill you and let you reunite with your two unfortunate parents."

"Reunite?"

Thinking of his parents, Linley's urge to kill grew only stronger.

"Have a taste of my straight chisel technique." Linley's face appeared to be covered by a layer of frost. With a wave of his hand, he sent the straight chisel directly towards Clayde's waist. But once the straight chisel got within ten centimeters or so of Clayde, it was suddenly impeded by a strange force.

A translucent sigil suddenly appeared in mid-air, easily blocking Linley's chisel. "What is this?" Linley was totally shocked.

"I told you. I will definitely kill you." Clayde stood up, looking at Linley arrogantly. His powerful body made him look like an enraged lion.

"Impossible."

Linley's body erupted with Dragonblood battle-qi, and the straight chisel in his hands chopped viciously towards Clayde's body.

"Swish! Swish!" Seven chops in a row, all aimed at a different part of Clayde's body. But no matter where he chopped, his chisel would be blocked by that translucent pattern at around ten centimeters away from Clayde's body.

"You don't have the ability to kill me," Clayde said arrogantly.

"Raaaargh!" On Linley's shoulders, Bebe's mouth suddenly widened and expanded as he viciously bit down at Clayde. Facing Bebe's bite attack, Clayde

didn't seem afraid in the slightest. Perhaps he was simply too confident in the power of this defense, as he didn't even try to dodge.

When Bebe's fangs crunched down against that translucent defense, the translucent barrier suddenly glowed with the seven colors of the rainbow for a moment, and then the colors vanished.

"Hrm?"

The expression on Clayde's face changed. "What a powerful attack." Clayde didn't dare to let Bebe bite him again, and he quickly charged towards the outside.

"Boss, attack him, attack him! That defensive barrier on his body isn't innate to him. It must be some sort of magical spell from a scroll or something. There's got to be a limit to how much it can take! Your attacks will whittle away its energy, and once the energy is gone, he will definitely die!" Bebe frantically urged Linley.

Linley immediately understood this logic.

"You want to escape?!"

Linley's skin suddenly began to be covered by black scales, and those sharp spikes began to jut out from his elbows and kneecaps. A long, iron-whip-like tail sprouted from behind him, and on Linley's back, a row of spikes erupted from his spine.

Dragonform. Total Dragonform!

Even in his normal state, Linley was already a warrior of the seventh rank. After Dragonform, he was an early-stage warrior of the ninth rank.

"Swish!" Linley kicked off from the ground, and as he did, the marble beneath his feet cracked. Transforming into a blur, Linley charged directly at Clayde. Right now, Clayde was only able to rely on that comparatively pitifully small amount of muscle power to run, and thus couldn't move at high speed.

Linley's powerful, scale-covered right arm swept its claws ferociously at Clayde.

"Whap!" A terrifyingly powerful force smashed against Clayde's defensive



barrier. Although this barrier was able to protect Clayde, it would still be impacted by the momentum of the force. It was as though Clayde was inside an incredibly sturdy carriage. When others attacked the carriage, although Clayde wouldn't be harmed, the carriage would be sent flying in a certain direction. Naturally, Clayde would be sent flying as well.

This was exactly that sort of situation.

Clayde's body was sent flying forward, then smashed directly into a wooden screen. The wooden screen totally disintegrated from the power of this blow, but Clayde wasn't harmed at all. He rolled to his feet.

"Dragonblood Warrior. You actually can transform into a Dragonblood Warrior." Seeing Linley having truly Dragonformed, Clayde was totally stunned.

Before, Linley's strength wasn't that impressive. But after having taken on the Dragonform, he actually possessed the power of a warrior of the ninth rank. The fame of the Supreme Warriors really wasn't hollow.

"I can't let this continue. Otherwise, this Fateguard is going to collapse." The thing which Clayde counted on the most was this Fateguard. In the past, the Holy Emperor himself had bequeathed it to Clayde. This Fateguard came from one of the finest defensive magical scrolls in existence, and was powerful enough to allow Clayde to withstand a single blow from a Saint-level combatant!

Capable of blocking a full-power attack from a Saint-level combatant. As for a ninth-rank combatant, it could take dozens of blows before shattering.

"Clayde, I refuse to believe that the energy of your magical armor is endless and infinite." The totally Dragonformed Linley walked towards Clayde, step by step.

Seeing Linley with spikes jutting from his back, his entire body covered in scales, and in particular with that long, whip-like tail, Clayde felt he had encountered a human-shaped magical beast. In the past, he wouldn't have been the slightest bit afraid, but right now, he had less than a tenth of his usual power!

"Whoosh!" Clayde suddenly scurried forward, flying towards a window.

“Swish!”

Linley’s draconic tail swept over viciously. Despite moving later, it arrived first, landing directly on Clayde’s body. Clayde’s body was sent flying, smashing viciously at a corner of the window. Breaking through the window, Clayde’s body was sent rolling into the courtyard. With a leap, Linley flew out as well, the ground beneath his feet splintering from his jump.

“You still want to escape?”

Linley’s Dragonformed claws and legs all ferociously attacked Clayde, while at the same time, Bebe continuously bit and scratched at Clayde, trying to whittle away the energy in his defensive barrier as quickly as possible.

Relying on his significant combat experience, as well as his natural strength as a warrior of the seventh rank, as well as the defensive power of the Fateguard, Clayde did his best to dodge Linley’s blows and delay as long as he could.

“Protect his Majesty! Protect his Majesty!”

“Roaaar!”

From outside, the sounds of many people shouting could be heard, as well as the roar of a magical beast.

“Linley, today, you are doomed to die.” Clayde was exultant. By now, he could sense that his Fateguard had only expended half of its energy. It had more than enough to continue to block Linley’s attacks. Linley’s gaze grew even colder.

“If one comes, I’ll kill one. If two come, I’ll kill a pair. I will kill however many come!” Linley’s killing intent had boiled to a crescendo.

“Whap!” Linley’s draconic tail smashed viciously down on Clayde, sending him flying into the courtyard’s wall, which immediately began to crack. At the same time, the sharp claws of a black blur fiercely swiped down at Clayde’s body, smashing Clayde hard against the ground yet again.

“Crash!”

The closed gate to the courtyard suddenly split open, sending its shattered shards flying everywhere. A five-meter-long, three-meter-tall lion with a body of pure white fur charged inside. From its mouth, it spat out hundreds of

javelin-sized jade-blue spikes, while behind it, a group of palace experts charged in as well!

## Even if I Die, I'll Kill You!

The group of warriors who had charged in behind the Glacial Snow Lion were all shocked upon seeing the scene within the courtyard.

“What is this monster?”

The creature within the courtyard was covered in black scales, a back covered with a row of sharp spikes that gleamed with a cold, golden light, and an iron-whip-like draconic tail that swung back and forth. In particular, when this monster stared at them, they noticed its strange, dark golden eyes.

These dark golden eyes were filled with heartlessness, coldness, and murder!

“Graaaaaawr!” Not afraid in the slightest, the Glacial Snow Lion was the first to charge forward at the monster.

The Glacial Snow Lion spat a mass of jade-blue javelins from its mouth, but the monster didn't dodge at all, allowing them to strike against his scales. With a thunderous clatter, the air was rent by the sound of the collision. The attack hadn't harmed the monster at all!

“F\*ck off!” A guttural, furious voice rang out from the mouth of the monster.

Its right leg suddenly transformed into a cylindrical blur and viciously smashed against the Glacial Snow Lion's body. The Glacial Snow Lion was actually kicked away! This was a magical beast of the eighth rank, but it was sent flying away by a single kick.

But how could these guards know that having fully Dragonformed, Linley had stepped into the domain of a combatant of the ninth rank!

“Kill him, kill him!” Clayde howled loudly with rage.

Only now did those experts, who had been stunned by this scene, recover. Immediately, all of them let out angry cries as they drew their weapons and charged towards Linley. At the same time, the magical beast companions

belonging to these experts also began to charge at Linley.

Magical beast, Frostwolf. Magical beast, Gorehorse. Magical beast, Mastodon. Magical beast, Bluewind Warbird.

One magical beast after another charged at Linley from the air or from the ground. Linley was like a whirlpool, attracting all of the nearby warriors and magical beasts to attack him. This sort of large-scale focused attack was truly very terrifying.

Linley's death-promising gaze was locked onto Clayde. Bebe continued to attack Clayde nonstop, reducing the energy remaining in Clayde's Fateguard.

"Clayde, today, I must kill you." Linley didn't care about the surrounding warriors in the slightest. Right now, the strongest person present was a warrior of the eighth rank. Although in his Dragonform, Linley was still just an early-stage ninth rank warrior, Linley had inherited one of the strongest traits of the Armored Razorback Wyrms; an incredibly terrifying defense!

The attack of a warrior of the eighth rank, when landing on Linley's black scales, couldn't hurt Linley in the slightest.

The only large-sized man among them, a two-meter-tall, massively muscled man with a waist like a bear swung a massive battleaxe at Linley. On top of the battleaxe was a layer of blazing red light, causing even the temperature of the air itself to rise.

"F\*ck off!"

Linley didn't dodge at all. Balling his fierce claws into a fist, he punched at the axe with astonishing speed, splitting the air with the force of his punch.

"Bam!"

That massive, sturdy battleaxe was directly smashed into smithereens. Linley's fist didn't slow down in the slightest as it pierced through the warrior's chest. And even as his fist penetrated the man's chest, Linley's other hand came piercing in as well...

With a powerful tug from both arms, Linley ripped the warrior into two halves from within. Blood splattered all over Linley's scales, making Linley look all the

more like a demon come from the pits of hell.

“Second Bro!”

The other three warriors screamed with rage. The one whom Linley had killed was one of those four warriors of the eighth rank. The eyes of the three remaining warrior turned red, and alongside their magical beasts, they all charged towards Linley.

“Whap!” Linley’s draconic tail suddenly swept at them from the side.

One of the warriors who had intended to ambush Linley from behind, a tall, skinny, golden-haired man, was struck on the head by the tail. His head shattered, spraying blood everywhere.

“He’s a demon, a demon! Everyone, kill him!” Terrified by Linley’s display of might, everyone began to scream and attack.

More and more people were pouring in from the more distant courtyards, and even some of the guards that had been originally stationed to protect Linley came charging in to attack Linley as well. Because black scales covered Linley’s entire body, even his face, nobody knew... that this monster was Linley!

In everyone’s minds, this was a terrifying demon!

Kill it!

“Your Majesty, hurry and flee!” Two warriors of the eighth rank leapt over to Clayde’s side. But just as they finished speaking, a black shadow charged towards them. These two warriors had extremely fast reaction times though, and with a tremble, their bodies became blurs as well.

“Ah!”

A chunk of flesh from one of the warrior’s shoulders was bitten off, and that black shadow continued to attack that warrior. Relying on fierce claws and sharp teeth, in a very short period of time, over ten pieces of flesh were bitten off that warrior, and blood flowed from everywhere on his body.

Having lost too much blood and too much flesh, the warrior began to stagger and stumble.

“Crunch!”

A sharp paw directly slapped onto his skull, crushing it and killing him on the spot.

“Bebe, focus your attacks on Clayde!” Linley’s voice rang out in Bebe’s mind.

“Got it, Boss!”

“Whoosh!” Clayde had seized this opportunity to jump out the courtyard.

“Shiiiiirk!” Bebe’s high-pitched screech once more split the air. Transforming into a black blur, Bebe smashed directly into the wall at high speed. The already-cracked wall instantly split apart, and Bebe charged straight through, attacking Clayde frantically.

“Kill this demon! Everyone, kill him!” Clayde commanded in a loud voice.

“Your Majesty!”

The people in Linley’s courtyard were growing greater and greater in number, and thousands of soldiers from the palace had come charging in to protect the king as well. Many nobles as well, having noticed the commotion, immediately ordered their people to protect his Majesty. The number of people in Linley’s manor could already be described with the phrase, ‘an ocean of people’.

People were everywhere!

“For honor!”

“For honor!”

A squad of Knights of the Radiant Church immediately rushed in front of Clayde, and all of them simultaneously attacked that lightning-fast black blur. For the sake of protecting his Majesty, a large number of soldiers were willing to ignore their own safety.

“Shkreeeee!”

Bebe’s high-pitched screech once more split the air, and his speed suddenly increased even further. Bebe’s strange blurred body, sharp claws, fierce fangs, and astonishing speed had transformed into the emissary of the god of death, and one warrior after another collapsed.

Bebe directly burrowed through some of their chests. Others were

decapitated, their heads sent flying. The skulls of others were shattered...

Circling around and around, Bebe continued to attack Clayde. Clayde could clearly feel that the energy around his body was continuing to diminish.

“This pet of Linley’s is too terrifying.” Only now did Clayde totally understand how much power Linley had.

Right now, Linley had been totally surrounded and pinned down by an ocean of warriors. He was powerful, true. But under the mass attack of a huge number of magical beasts and warriors, even if he was able to kill a person in a single blow, he would still need to take a long time.

“I can’t delay. Once the Saint-level combatants of the Radiant Church arrive, I won’t have any chance at all.”

Seeing the crazed masses set against him, and the warriors screeching words such as ‘For honor’ and ‘For his Majesty’ and ‘Demon’, Linley grew more and more frantic. What’s more, many magi were lobbing spells at Linley from afar as well.

“Whap!”

“Bam!”

Linley’s body seemed to have transformed into a rainbow, as countless magical spells landed on his body. But Linley’s defensive abilities were simply too terrifying. The Armored Razorback Wyrms were praised as the dragon-type beast with the highest defensive power. There was no question about this.

“Shkreeeee!” Far away, Bebe’s screeching cry could be heard, but Linley was surrounded by a sea of soldiers and warriors. He couldn’t help but feel frantic.

“Clayde!”

“Father! Mother! Today, even if I die, I will kill him. If worse comes to worst, then our family will reunite in the Netherworld! Little Wharton, I entrust the Baruch clan to you!” Linley said to himself. At this moment, Linley no longer cared about or feared death.

“Clayde!!!”

Linley let out a furious roar, and his scale-covered right arm touched his waist.



Suddenly, a beautiful violet flash lit the air.

“Die, all of you, die!”

Linley began to slaughter!

Linley transformed into a tornado, and the violet light flickered around beautifully, its strange radiance flashing here and there. Every place Linley passed by, warriors would fall down, chopped in half or turned into meat paste.

The Godsword, Bloodviolet!

Given Bloodviolet’s sharpness, especially when wielded by the Dragonformed Linley, even warriors of the seventh rank were directly chopped in half.

A massacre!

Wielding Bloodviolet, Linley’s rate of slaughter increased tenfold. Wherever that purple light flashed, groups of warriors would fall to the ground. Linley was charging forward in Clayde’s direction at high speed. Every step forward, he was forced to kill ten people!

Kill!

Kill!

Kill!

Human blood spurted everywhere like fountains, and shattered bones lay everywhere, as common as mud. The black-scale-covered Dragonformed Linley seemed to have truly transformed into a demon from hell. In the face of his massacring charge, one warrior after another collapsed.

Nobody could stop his advance!

“Bam!” With each step, Linley made the earth shake. Bloodviolet danced in his hands, and yet another body collapsed. All of the bushes in the manmade hill nearby had been eradicated long ago, and all of the walls in the manor had toppled as well.

Linley finally arrived by Clayde’s side. Because of Bebe’s constant attacks, Clayde hadn’t been able to flee anywhere.

“Linley, must you kill me?” Clayde glared at Linley.

Linley's lips curved upwards, ever so slightly.

Must?

Ever since his father died and Linley had instructed Hillman to take the warblade 'Slaughterer' out of the Holy Union, Linley had made his mind up. No matter what, he was going to avenge his father.

"Hah!"

His Dragonblood battle-qi exploding, Linley's arms suddenly, bizarrely expanded in size by an inch, as his physical strength was pushed to the limit. Seeming to shatter and slice through the air itself, the Bloodviolet Godsword in his hands cut down viciously on Clayde's body.

"Bam!" Clayde was knocked flying by the force of that blow, and his body viciously slammed against that manmade hill. The boulders atop the manmade hill were sent flying everywhere.

His body turning into a blur, Linley once more appeared in front of him.

Linley seemed to have turned into a tornado, and as he turned, his right leg lashed out fiercely against Clayde's neck. Although this blow was once more guarded against by the Fateguard, Clayde's body was still smashed deep into the ground by the force of that blow.

"Whap!" Immediately following Linley's right leg was Linley's draconic tail.

Like a whip, it struck harshly again and again on Clayde's body. The power that was being slammed onto Clayde's body and through it into the ground was akin to a meteor striking the earth. More than ten large cracks appeared on the ground, and his body sank into the newly created crevice.

The translucent barrier protecting Clayde's body was beginning to tremble, and the seven-colored rainbow was flashing wildly, about to break at any moment.

"It's about to break," Linley exulted wildly.

"Protect his Majesty!" A high-pitched shout rang out.

"Lord Kaiser!"

The warriors who had been terrified by the way they had been slaughtered by Linley and Bebe were ecstatic. A powerfully-built man with long, flowing jade hair charged forward, a greatsword in his hands. The speed of his movements weren't inferior to Linley in the slightest.

Linley's heart shook. "The second warrior of the ninth rank in the Kingdom of Fenlai, Kaiser. Not good!"

"Forget it." Linley didn't even turn to look at Kaiser. He quickly chased after Clayde, who had seized the opportunity to flee out of the crevice he had been smashed into. Clayde's Fateguard defense had been stretched to the limit, and could shatter at any moment. He had to seize this last moment to kill Clayde!

"Stop!" Kaiser howled with rage.

"Bam!"

Linley once again smashed a fist against Clayde, this time landing an uppercut on Clayde's jaw, sending him rising up in the air. Immediately following, Linley's body turned around at high speed and, like a pair of battleaxes, his right leg and his iron-whip-like tail struck in sequence against Clayde's body.

"Bzzzt." A very strange sound emanated from Clayde's body.

Clayde's body was in midair, and the protective barrier around him was trembling nonstop, glowing with that seven-colored rainbow. But just then, in midair, a black blur flashed towards him, sending a vicious claw against that seven-colored rainbow.

"Shatter!"

A clear sound could be heard, and the barrier around Clayde's body broke apart.

"It broke." Seeing this, Linley was wildly happy. He immediately charged directly for Clayde, but right at this moment, Kaiser arrived and chopped viciously at Linley with his greatsword. But Linley didn't care about the sword in the slightest, continuing to charge directly at Clayde.

But just at this moment...

None of the thousands of battling warriors in Linley's manor had noticed that

a person was floating in mid-air, watching from above. Although this person was standing in mid-air, someone staring up at him from below wouldn't be able to see him at all. They would see nothing there.

He was very skinny, bald, and wore a long white robe. His face was calm, and he watched the proceedings below with the icy gaze of a god.

It was his Holiness, the Radiant Church's Holy Emperor himself!

## Won't Accept It

“As I suspected, this genius of the Baruch clan is indeed capable of Dragonforming. Although it isn't quite the same as the Dragonblood Warriors of record, despite his youth, he already has the power of a warrior of the ninth rank. The Dragonblood Warriors live up to their reputation as one of the Four Supreme Warriors.”

The Holy Emperor of the Radiant Church, Heidens, had a hint of a smile on his face as he watched the goings-on below.

The thousand plus casualties below and the blood-stained earth wasn't enough to make the Holy Emperor's heart quiver even slightly.

“Kaiser, stop him!” Clayde shouted frantically.

Clayde had never imagined that despite being in possession of a Fateguard, that he would be beleaguered to this extent. What's more, it was within the Holy Capital of Fenlai City.

“Yes, your Majesty!” Kaiser called out in response, while sweeping his greatsword towards Linley.

Linley didn't try to defend against this attack at all. “Even if I have to take this blow head on, I am going to kill Clayde first.” The death of his parents had filled Linley with boundless hatred towards Clayde. Only by killing Clayde would he be satisfied. Otherwise, even if he died, he would be unsatisfied!

“Thud!” The greatsword slammed against Linley's body.

Linley had been planning to take this blow head-on, but he suddenly realized that, bizarrely, this actually wasn't an attack against him at all. This blow was used to block Linley's charging momentum, while at the same time, Kaiser took advantage of the counterforce to knock himself flying towards Clayde at an astonishing speed.

“Swish!” Bebe once more charged towards Clayde.

“Bam!” That greatsword sliced through the air, blocking Bebe’s way. Bebe used his fierce claws to exchange a vicious blow against the greatsword.

“Clang!”

Bebe only felt a fiery aura emanate from the surface of that greatsword, while at the same time, a fierce gust of battle-qi raged towards him. Bebe immediately dodged quickly, but nonetheless that fiery battle-qi struck his body. However, relying on his astonishing defensive abilities, Bebe only somersaulted through the air once before landing on the ground again.

Kaiser stood in front of Clayde, staring coldly at Linley and Bebe.

“Boss, this guy is really tough!” Bebe’s fur was standing straight up, and he stared fixedly at Kaiser.

Linley could also sense Kaiser’s power. In terms of speed, Kaiser wasn’t a single bit slower than him, and when he struck with his sword, his speed was even more astonishing. This Kaiser was a true, full warrior of the ninth rank, with significant experience as well.

“Who are you? Why are you trying to kill his Majesty?” Sword in hand, Kaiser stared coldly at Linley.

Linley didn’t speak. Tapping his waist, the Bloodviolet Godsword once more appeared in his hands. At the same time, Linley immediately utilized the wind-style supporting spell, Supersonic. A Supersonic spell of the seventh rank was still capable of raising Linley’s speed a bit.

“A double expert, both magus and warrior.” The expression on Kaiser’s face changed.

“Clayde!” Linley’s guttural voice rang out.

Right now, there was a group of warriors surrounding Clayde, but as far as Linley was concerned, aside from that Kaiser, none of them were capable of opposing him.

“Swish!” Linley furiously stomped the ground, causing the ground to split and crack. Relying on that powerful counterforce, Linley transformed into a

merciless black blur and shot straight towards Clayde.

“Whoosh!” Bebe, being spiritually linked with Linley, shot out at the same time.

“Chi! Chi!” The Bloodviolet Godsword transformed into a violet blur of light, piercing directly at Kaiser. With a flip of his wrist, Kaiser’s huge sword moved with surprising agility to block Linley’s Bloodviolet. But just at that moment...

That previously ramrod stiff Bloodviolet Godsword suddenly curved, avoiding Kaiser’s sword and thrusting directly at Kaiser.

It was too close!

Kaiser didn’t have the chance to dodge at all.

“Bam!”

Three centimeters away from Kaiser’s body, the Bloodviolet Godsword suddenly came to a halt, ramming against a layer of blazing red battle-qi that was sprung up to protect Kaiser. As a warrior of the ninth rank, Kaiser was incredibly strong, even a bit more so than Linley.

This blow having failed, Linley didn’t hesitate in the slightest, charging directly towards the nearby Clayde.

“Halt!” Kaiser let out a low shout, about to move to block Linley.

But from the corner of his eyes, Kaiser noticed a black blur suddenly arrive at the back of his neck. Kaiser knew exactly how terrifying this unique magical beast could be, and he didn’t dare to use his battle-qi to forcibly block its fierce claws.

Kaiser hurriedly and agilely pivoted to dodge, putting some distance between him and Bebe. Flipping the greatsword in his hand again, he chopped directly at Bebe.

“Kaiser, come save me!” Clayde called out frantically.

Kaiser couldn’t help but grow anxious. Both Linley and this terrifying magical beast had, without question, the power of a combatant of the ninth rank. What’s more, that magical beast of Linley’s possessed both incredible agility and terrifying defense. Kaiser was confident in his ability to deal with one, but

dealing with two was a major headache.

“Slash!”

As the Bloodviolet Godsword cut through the air, it left behind a trail of severed limbs and sprays of blood.

Linley’s dark gold eyes were fixed firmly upon Clayde, and he charged towards Clayde at high speed. Everyone who sought to block him was bisected by the Bloodviolet Godsword in Linley’s hands. Blood had already dyed every inch of Linley’s black scales!

With each step he took, he killed ten people!

“Slash!” After chopping away the last two warriors guarding Clayde, Linley charged directly towards Clayde.

“Don’t, don’t kill me!” Clayde was now truly afraid.

Kaiser was still being entangled by that astonishingly durable Bebe, and simply wasn’t going to be able to come rescue him. As for the other warriors, they were nothing more than an afterthought to Linley. The power of Linley in his complete Dragonform was enough that he would only fear a combatant of the Saint level. Even most warriors of the ninth rank would not be enough to make Linley afraid.

“Clayde, die.”

This time, Linley didn’t use his sword. With his right claw, he swiped viciously at Clayde’s neck. He wanted to rip Clayde to death with his own hands.

“Ah!” Clayde hurriedly flew backwards at high speed, falling against a manmade hill.

But with a single twitch of his legs, Linley once more appeared in front of him. Those fierce claws arrived directly in front of Clayde’s eyes.

“Father. Mother. I’ve finally avenged you.” Linley’s heart was shaking, and he brought his right claw down with force. The totally unprotected Clayde, in front of Linley, was like a toothless, claw-less animal.

Clayde’s eyes were filled with terror and disbelief.



“Thruuuuum.”

An extremely strange vibration suddenly emanated from the sky. In the blink of an eye, it totally surrounded Linley, making him feel as though he was sunken in quicksand. His entire body had been bound, and he couldn't use any more force with his right claws.

If Linley were to use just a bit more force, he would be able to sever Clayde's neck. But Linley wasn't able to move in the slightest.

Clayde stared, stunned, and then he exulted wildly.

“Ha... hahahaha!”

Clayde began to laugh loudly, and then he slowly retreated several steps before raising his head to stare at the sky. At this moment, a white-robed figure slowly floated over from up above in the sky. It was his Holiness, the Holy Emperor Heidens.

“Your Holiness.” Clayde immediately bowed respectfully.

All of the warriors nearby, Kaiser included, were stunned. But then immediately, they all bowed very respectfully and called out respectfully, “Your Holiness!”

The highest authority within the Holy Union. The man with the authority to depose a ruler from his rule. The Holy Emperor, Heidens, had appeared.

The Holy Emperor walked one step at a time towards Linley, and as he did, Linley suddenly felt as though he had escaped from the quicksand and could now move. But facing the Holy Emperor's gaze, Linley only felt his heart quiver.

“Your Holiness!” At this time, another squad rushed over, with two Cardinals leading them, along with several Executors from the Ecclesiastical Tribunal.

“Heathen!” Guillermo, seeing the fully Dragonformed Linley, was the first to speak, his face changing.

The Holy Emperor Heidens calmly glanced at Guillermo. Guillermo instantly fell silent, not daring to make another sound.

“Get out.”

Linley's guttural voice rang out, causing the Holy Emperor Heidens to look at Linley with some surprise. Despite being affected by the power of his presence, this man still was resisting? Heidens knew very well that his presence was even more powerful than the presence of most Saint-level combatants, because Heidens was carrying several valuable treasures of the Radiant Church on him.

"Surrender," Heidens spoke.

"Whoosh!"

Linley suddenly moved, transforming into a blur as he flew towards Clayde, while striking in an arc towards Clayde with that iron-whip-like draconic tail. Without question, the terrifying power of Linley's tail was enough to kill Clayde with one blow.

Heidens suddenly made a waving gesture with his right hand. "WHAP!" Linley's body was sent flying far away, slamming into a distant manmade hill. Rocks shattered, and blood began to seep out all across Linley's body. From this single blow, his astonishingly sturdy scales had been shattered to the point of allowing blood to be drawn.

Heidens glanced at Guillermo.

Guillermo understood what Heidens wanted. He shouted an order to the Executors of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal. "Take this demon away!"

Instantly, four Executors charged towards Linley.

"Boss!" Bebe's voice rang out in Linley's mind.

Linley was half-kneeling against the manmade hill, and blood was dribbling out of his mouth. "Bebe. Leave. Leave now. While they haven't noticed you, leave!"

"I won't leave." Bebe was crouching off in the distance behind the corner of a wall, but continued to mentally converse with Linley.

"No. With the Holy Emperor present, we no longer have any chance at all. He hasn't noticed you yet, so you have a chance to slip away. Bebe... leave now. I must kill that Clayde. Even if I die, I need you to help me kill him. If even you are caught, in the future I will have no chance at all."

“Boss...”

“Leave! Or else, even if I die, I won’t forgive you!” Linley roared mentally.

In the corner of that wall, Bebe stared at Linley, his little eyes filled with fury, grief, and an unwillingness to depart.

“Leave now!”

Linley mentally howled with fury at him. At this moment, those four Executors had walked to Linley’s side and reached out, intending to subdue Linley. But that half-kneeling Linley suddenly rose to his feet, like a praying mantis attacking from ambush.

“Swish!” A violet light flashed. All four of them were bisected at the waist.

“Die!” Linley charged towards Clayde once again.

The expression on Clayde’s face changed.

“Even if I die, I will kill you first!” Linley howled with rage.

“Hrmph!”

The eyes of the Holy Emperor Heidens flashed coldly, and he let out a sneer. His right hand slapped in Linley’s general direction, and suddenly, a terrifyingly powerful force appeared out of nowhere, surrounding and pressing down Linley from all sides. Linley felt as though an enormous mountain had just slammed onto his body.

“Bam!” Linley was slammed into the ground.

“Crack!” Linley felt that the bones in his body were suddenly broken in over ten different places. Totally paralyzed, he lay there on the ground, unable to move again. Nobody, no matter how strong, would be able to move with so many bones broken.

“Take him away,” Guillermo once again ordered.

“Boss...” Seeing the sorry state Linley was in, tears were flowing down Bebe’s face.

Linley was lying on the ground, totally paralyzed. All the bones in his arms, legs and ribs were shattered. He couldn’t move at all. The black scales covering

him were in even worse shape, and blood flowed out from the flesh beneath the scales, dying his entire body red.

“Boss.”

“Leave! Bebe, leave!” Linley was mentally roaring with rage.

Several Executors of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal roughly lifted Linley up. Perhaps it was because they had just seen Linley murder four of their colleagues, but their hands were not gentle, and as they carried him, they didn’t pay any attention to his wounds. This sort of carrying method caused Linley’s entire body to be filled with agony.

As he was lifted and carried away, Linley continued to stare unblinkingly at Clayde.

“Haha, haha...” Clayde began to laugh again.

Staring at Clayde with those dark gold eyes, Linley roared furiously, “If I don’t kill you, I won’t rest! Even in death, I won’t accept it!” Linley’s voice made the heart of that far-off Bebe quiver.

Hearing these words, Clayde’s heart couldn’t help but quiver as well.

“I, won’t, accept it!” Two trails of tears cascaded down from Linley’s eyes. He had been so close to victory. But in the end, he had still failed to kill Clayde.

## In Dire Straits

Within the hotel at the end of the Greenleaf Road, Yale and a group of people were waiting.

“Young master. His Majesty suffered an attack from some sort of demonic creature at Lord Linley’s manor. Right now, many palace guards as well as the warriors of many noble clans have gone to protect his Majesty,” a golden-haired man in front of Yale said respectfully.

Yale was startled.

He knew that Linley wanted to kill Clayde, and now, Clayde was the target of an assassination attempt. Nine out of ten, this had something to do with Linley.

“I wonder if this so-called ‘demonic creature’ is actually Third Bro.” Yale began to worry.

But Yale could only wait here quietly. He had no other options. Shortly afterwards, another report came. “Young master Yale, that demonic creature has begun a wild slaughter fest. Too many people have died. Lord Linley’s manor has become a river of blood, and is littered with corpses.”

Yale secretly felt shocked.

“Third Bro is really formidable. But I don’t know if Third Bro will be able to escape in the end.” Yale could only continue to wait.

One report after another continued to come.

“Young master Yale, that demonic monster’s violet sword is far too powerful. Wherever that violet flash appears, death follows. Countless people have died within the manor. Of the palace guards, many platoons and even entire companies have been wiped out.”

Upon hearing this, Yale became even more certain.

“A violet sword? Could it be that Bloodviolet sword?” Yale, Reynolds, and George all knew that Linley was in possession of a Bloodviolet Godsword. In particular, Yale suddenly recollected something about Linley’s clan. “The Baruch clan is the clan of the Dragonblood Warriors. Can it be that Linley transformed into a Dragonblood Warrior?”

The so-called ‘demonic creature’ could very well be Linley after having transformed into a Dragonblood Warrior.

Thinking about how his beloved bro was currently being attacked by thousands of men and beasts and was engaging in a wild battle, Yale couldn’t help but worry even more.

“Third Bro!”

Yale’s fists clenched, relaxed, clenched, relaxed. All of the people present could sense his nervousness.

“Young master Yale. His Holiness, the Holy Emperor appeared. He heavily injured that demonic creature, and it has already been dragged back to the Radiant Temple.” The final report came back. Yale’s face turned white, devoid of all blood.

Upon hearing the words, “His Holiness, the Holy Emperor appeared”, Yale knew that things had just gone from bad to worse.

“Squeak squeak!” A black blur suddenly appeared within the hotel.

“Bebe.” Seeing this Shadowmouse, Yale instantly ran over to it.

“Bebe. Where is Third Bro?” Yale immediately looked at Bebe, asking desperately.

The little Shadowmouse, Bebe, didn’t have any of his usual exuberance. He only stared at Yale, then lowered his head and let out a few dejected squeaks. Yale could sense the grief and pain hidden within Bebe’s eyes. Although Bebe was a magical beast, his intelligence was no lower than that of a human.

“Swish.” Bebe’s body flickered, and he suddenly disappeared from in front of Yale.

Yale was startled.

“Young master Yale,” a nearby person said softly.

“Go back. Go find my Second Uncle.” Yale suddenly rose to his feet and issued orders to his men.

Within one of the more secluded private rooms on the ninth floor of the Radiant Temple. Linley had been tossed inside the room like a dying dog. For Linley to be imprisoned within the Radiant Temple was actually still a testament to how highly the Radiant Church valued Linley.

The Radiant Temple was the heart of the Radiant Church.

This was a place which even Saint-level combatants dared not to trespass into.

“Ah.” All the scales on Linley’s body had already retracted back inside. Currently, Linley’s body was covered with blood, and he had more than ten visible wounds. These wounds were all caused by the Holy Emperor, Heidens. His visible wounds were very serious. But his internal wounds were even worse.

The bones of all four of his limbs had been broken. Linley could only grit his teeth as he tried to force his body to move, but all he could accomplish was resting his head against the wall.

“Linley.”

Doehring Cowart flew out of the Coiling Dragon ring. He looked at Linley, and his eyes were filled with affection and helplessness.

“Grandpa Doehring.” Linley looked at Doehring Cowart.

Doehring Cowart sighed mentally towards Linley. “Linley, do you feel any regret?”

“Regret?”

Linley shook his head. “No. In fact, in this life, I have only two desires. The first is to reclaim the lost glory of my clan. The second is to reach the highest pinnacle of power and training that I can reach. But if I do not gain my revenge, I probably won’t even be able to sleep well. I would be in torment my entire life.”

Doehring Cowart nodded. He could understand Linley’s frame of mind.

“I lost. Haha. I lost.”

Linley laughed lightly. His entire body hurt. Right now, most likely any person at all could easily trample him.

He lost!

As soon as the Holy Emperor had appeared, Linley knew.

He lost. And losing meant death.

Linley had been aware of this long ago. In this world, many people died every day. Linley never believed that it was impossible for him to die.

“Linley, you probably won’t die,” Doehring Cowart said.

“Huh?” Linley looked questioningly at Doehring Cowart.

Doehring Cowart laughed calmly. “If that Holy Emperor wanted to kill you, he would’ve killed you long ago. How could it be that he would have acted against you several times, yet still spared your life? In addition... you haven’t considered the fact that most likely, a ruler of a kingdom holds less attraction for him than you do.”

Linley suddenly began to understand a bit.

“The second greatest genius magus in all of history, someone likely to become a Saint-level Grand Magus. And now, the Holy Emperor has discovered that you are a Dragonblood Warrior as well. Most likely, he would be all the more reluctant to kill you now. The Dragonblood Warriors are one of the Supreme Warriors. Upon entering the Saint level, you will definitely be one of the most powerful Saint-level combatants. In terms of attack power alone, you definitely won’t be any inferior to the Holy Emperor himself!” Doehring Cowart said with certainty.

Supreme Warriors were very terrifying.

Most people, upon entering the Saint level, would have to progress through the so-called early-stage, middle-stage, and peak-stage.

But upon entering the Saint level, a Supreme Warrior, especially in Dragonform, would definitely be a peak-stage Saint-level combatant with incredible defense and offense. Even amongst peak-stage Saint-level



combatants, the Supreme Warriors would probably be amongst the most powerful.

“Heidens won’t be willing to kill a genius like you unless there’s absolutely no options available.” After finishing his speech, Doebling Cowart flew back into the Coiling Dragon ring.

Linley’s heart was very calm.

Life, death?

The thing which Linley truly cared about was vengeance.

“I’m afraid that even if he spares me, Heidens won’t allow me to kill Clayde.” Linley knew very well that having failed to kill Clayde this time, in the future, it would be very hard for him to kill Clayde. If he couldn’t kill Clayde, in his heart, Linley wouldn’t be able to accept it.

“Who knows when I will be able to get vengeance.”

Linley’s heart was filled with helplessness.

Within the highest floor of the Radiant Temple. The Holy Emperor, Heidens, was sitting calmly on his seat.

Guillermo was staring at the Holy Emperor in shock. “Your Holiness, that demon was Linley? But... but...”

At first, Guillermo hadn’t known that person was Linley, but after the scales had retracted into Linley’s body, Guillermo discovered his identity. This had totally shocked the man.

“That wasn’t a demon. That was a Dragonblood Warrior!” Heidens glanced calmly at Guillermo.

Guillermo was startled, but then he quickly understood. “Right... the Baruch clan is the clan of the Dragonblood Warriors. But it has been over a thousand years since the Dragonblood warrior clan has produced a Dragonblood Warrior. It’s unimaginable that... that... that Linley was actually... your Holiness, that was a Dragonblood Warrior?”

Remembering how terrifying Linley had appeared, Guillermo felt his heart tremble a bit.

“Perhaps a mutated version. But it should be a Dragonblood Warrior transformation, yes. Otherwise, how could he rise in power so quickly?” Heidens said calmly. “This Linley’s potential is too great. Although this time, his offense was a major one, there are very few outsiders who know that ‘demon’ was actually Linley.”

Guillermo instantly understood Heidens’ meaning.

Linley’s potential is too great?

Guillermo sighed to himself. Linley’s potential was absolutely terrifying. Not only was his potential as a magus incredible, he was also a Supreme Warrior. In both aspects, he was a very terrifying person. If such a person could remain within the Radiant Church, in several decades, the Radiant Church would almost assuredly have another supreme combatant.

“Indeed. Your Holiness, others all say that it was a demon. Aside from those Executors who dragged Linley back, nobody else knows this demon was Linley,” Guillermo said respectfully.

“Oh. Those four. Deal with them,” Heidens said coldly.

“Yes, your Holiness,” Guillermo said respectfully. “It is their good fortune to be able to return to the Lord’s embrace.”

Guillermo then said softly, “Right. Your Holiness, another person knows that the demon is actually Linley.”

“You mean... Clayde?” Heidens said softly.

“Yes, your Holiness,” Guillermo said. Questioningly, he wondered, “Clearly, this Linley has an extremely deep grievance with Clayde, otherwise he wouldn’t have gone to this extent to kill him. Your Holiness, Clayde is the ruler of the Kingdom of Fenlai. If we are to preserve Linley, perhaps we should have a chat with Clayde.”

“Yes, we should have a chat.”

A hint of a smile was on Heidens’ face. “I am very curious. What sort of deep grievance and enmity does Linley have with Clayde?”

Late in the evening, Clayde arrived at the top floor of the Radiant Temple.

“Your Holiness.” Clayde bowed respectfully.

The Holy Emperor, Heidens, was seated on his chair, leafing through a few thick tomes. Without even looking up, he said, “Clayde. In your opinion, who is more important to the Holy Union? You? Or Linley?”

Clayde’s heart thumped hard.

“The Holy Emperor means to preserve Linley?” Clayde’s heart began to grow frantic.

After having experienced this event, he now knew that Linley’s father and mother were killed as a result of him, even though he didn’t do it himself. In terms of responsibility for the deaths of Linley’s parents, he, Clayde, probably bore 90% of the responsibility.

That year in the past, if it hadn’t been for Clayde deciding to take Linley’s mother and offer her up, how could she have ended up dying? And how would Linley’s father have died?

Clayde remembered very clearly that look of unrelenting hatred in Linley’s eyes, even as Linley had been dragged away after being heavily wounded by the Holy Emperor.

“This Linley will fight with me until one of us dies. He cannot be allowed to live,” Clayde said to himself.

“Clayde, the outside world all believe that it was a demon. Nobody knows that it was Linley, yes?” Heidens looked at Clayde.

Hearing these words, Clayde was even more certain of the Holy Emperor’s intentions. He hurriedly said, “Your Holiness, that Linley truly is an incredible talent. Most likely, he is the greatest genius to have appeared in thousands of years, both as a magus as well as a warrior. He is an absolute genius. It is very understandable that your Holiness would desire to have him be of use to the Radiant Church. But... it is already determined that he will not be of service to our Church.”

These words from Clayde caused Heidens to frown. His eyes stared coldly at Clayde.

Clayde's heart quivered in fear.

But he knew that if Linley didn't die, then he would never have a moment's peace again.

"Your Holiness, do you know why Linley wishes to kill me?" Clayde hurriedly said.

"Summarize," Heidens said coldly.

Clayde immediately said, "Your Holiness, the reason Linley wishes to kill me is because twelve years ago, I sent people to abduct his mother. And then, his father, in the course of investigating his mother's disappearance, was killed. His mother and father, it can be said, died because of me."

"The enmity sowed by the deaths of one's parents is indeed a great one." Heidens nodded.

"But your Holiness, do you remember that woman from twelve years ago? That woman I gifted to you, your Holiness?" Clayde looked at Heidens.

Heidens started.

"Are you saying..." The look on Heidens' face changed.

"Right. That woman was Linley's mother!" Clayde said in a resounding, loud voice.

"Your Holiness, if Linley is to remain within the Radiant Church, then as his station rises, he will begin to learn some of the secrets of the Radiant Church. He will definitely discover how and why his mother died. By then... is it even remotely possible that he would still be loyal to the Radiant Church?" Clayde let out a mental sigh of relief.

He trusted that given the situation, Heidens would definitely decide to act appropriately. Yes, Linley's potential was high. But the more powerful Linley became, the greater a threat he would pose to the Radiant Church once he discovered the truth.

"If this is the case... pity. What a waste of a talent." Heidens let out a single sigh.

## A Hope of Living

Upon hearing the words, “What a waste of a genius”, Clayde exulted mentally.

He already knew that the Holy Emperor’s choice was.

“You can leave now,” Heidens waved his arm and said calmly.

“Yes, Your Holiness.” Clayde bowed respectfully, then turned and left the top floor of the Radiant Temple. In the entire hall, only Holy Emperor Heidens now remained. Walking to a window, Heidens stared down at the City of Fenlai, maintaining a long silence.

After a long time...

“Knock!” “Knock!” “Knock!” The sound of knocking on the door.

“Enter,” Heidens said calmly.

The person who entered was Cardinal Guillermo. Guillermo glanced at Heidens’s back. Able to sense that Heidens was in a foul mood, he respectfully lowered his voice. “Your Holiness, how should we attempt to persuade Linley?”

“Persuade? No need,” Heidens said calmly.

Guillermo couldn’t help but raise his head to stare at Heidens in astonishment. If they wanted Linley to be of use to them in the future, at the very least they would have to speak with him and persuade him. After all, not only had Heidens severely injured Linley, Linley had a deep grudge against Clayde to begin with.

“Guillermo, do you know who Linley’s mother was?” Heidens turned his head to stare at Guillermo. Guillermo was startled. Curiously, he said, “Linley’s mother? Didn’t she die while giving birth to Linley’s younger brother?”

“No.”

Heidens shook his head. “When you investigated Linley’s background and information regarding his mother, you weren’t able to uncover the truth. Linley’s mother was actually that woman we acquired twelve years ago.”

That woman from twelve years ago!

Guillermo instantly remembered, because that woman had had a huge impact on the upper levels of the Radiant Church.

“But if we’ve already killed his mother, then...” Guillermo instantly understood why the Holy Emperor was now in such a foul mood.

A genius such as Linley was extremely enticing. But in the future, once Linley discovered the truth about his mother, he would be a huge threat to the Radiant Church.

“Guillermo. The 28th of this month will be the day when the glorious aura of the Radiant Sovereign will be the strongest, is it not?” Heidens said suddenly.

“Yes.” Guillermo was somewhat perplexed by Heidens raising this question.

“Make the preparations. That night, I intend to beg the Radiant Sovereign for a divine boon,” Heidens said calmly.

“Divine boon?” Guillermo was greatly shocked, but then he quickly understood Heidens’s plan. He secretly sighed to himself, “The Holy Emperor is most likely requesting this divine boon on behalf of Linley. Although this will limit Linley’s future potential, given his talent, he will still be an incredible figure. Only, what a waste of his talent.”

A Divine Boon was in reality a manifestation of the divine power of the Radiant Sovereign in the material world.

The Radiant Sovereign, as a Sovereign, one of the most powerful entities in existence, could extend a thread of his divine, faith-based power to totally cleanse a person’s soul, causing them to be wholly devoted and faithful to the Radiant Sovereign. Only a person who had already reached the Saint level and was able to crystallize his soul would be able to resist the effects of this Divine Baptism.

Everyone else... definitely could not resist!

But after his soul had been affected by the Divine Baptism of the Radiant Sovereign, Linley's natural talent would be impacted as well. His future accomplishments would definitely be a bit lower.

"What a waste. What a waste of a talent." Heidens sighed again. This was the reason why earlier, in front of Clayde, he had said the words 'what a waste'. Heidens was, however, very confident. Once he had been affected by the Divine Baptism, even if he later found out about his mother's death, Linley would still be loyal and faithful to the Radiant Sovereign.

Because the faith this Divine Baptism created would go deep within a person's soul!

In the blink of an eye, ten days passed. The City of Fenlai was as calm as it had always been, but all the major noble clans in Fenlai felt a strange, oppressive atmosphere. For example, his Majesty, King Clayde, was always in a terrible mood these days, and several major ministers and nobles had run afoul of his temper and been executed.

On the Fragrant Pavilion Road, behind a lavishly decorated hotel, a group of people were gathered together within a quiet, three-story building.

Yale, George, and Reynolds had been here this entire time.

Ever since they had found out about what happened to Linley, the three of them had continued to worry for Linley. They knew very well what a huge disaster Linley had dragged down upon himself. Not only had he openly attacked King Clayde and killed over a thousand elite warriors of the kingdom, he had even forced the Holy Emperor himself to subdue him in the end.

"Boss Yale, have your people heard any news of Linley yet?" George asked, and Reynolds looked at Yale as well.

Yale shook his head.

All of them had ugly looks on their faces. They had grown up alongside Linley. At the Ernst Institute, they had eaten together and roomed together. Although they weren't actual siblings, they were every bit as close to each other as real brothers were. There was no way they could just stand by and watch as Linley was executed.

“There’s no way. I don’t have any means of reaching the high-level people in the Radiant Church.” Yale was somewhat frantic. “Wait a few more days. My father will arrive soon.”

Yale’s father.

Monroe Dawson!

The Chairman of the Dawson Conglomerate, and the controller of the enormously powerful Dawson clan, whose wealth made even the Four Great Empires and the two major alliances envious. Their mercantile web had already encompassed every city in the Yulan continent, and was totally able to determine whether a nation’s economy flourished or collapsed.

Each of the three major trading unions possessed tremendous power.

Neither the two major alliances nor the Four Great Empires were willing to be openly hostile against them, because once one of the trading unions was openly at war with an empire, it could very well trigger an economic collapse, wiping out decades of progress and causing chaos within its domain.

“Boss Yale, you told us to wait a few more days two days ago! If we keep on waiting, I’m afraid...” Reynolds was frantic as well.

There was nothing Yale could do.

Fortunately, his father had been engaging in some tourism in a kingdom not too far from the Kingdom of Fenlai. Upon getting the news, Yale had immediately gotten in touch with his father and expressed the hope that his father could come to Fenlai City as quickly as possible. Given his father’s status as the Chairman of the Dawson Conglomerate, most likely Heidens would personally welcome him to the city.

Once his father appeared, the chances of rescuing Linley would be exponentially greater.

“Young master, young master!” A tall, skinny youth came running in, excited. “Young master, the Chairman has arrived!”

“Father!”

Yale leapt to his feet in joy. In the eyes of Reynolds and George as well, a hint



of hope appeared.

Within the VIP reception hall of the Radiant Temple.

A two-meter-tall, bald, pudgy man stepped into the hall, grinning merrily. This bald fatty was two meters tall and of enormous girth, most likely weighing 300 to 400 pounds.

This was the Chairman of the Dawson Conglomerate – Monroe Dawson! From another door, in walked the Holy Emperor – Heidens.

Heidens was also nearly two meters tall, but he was quite thin. The two of them together, both tall, both bald, but one fat while the other was skinny, made for a very interesting sight.

Behind Monroe Dawson, there were two middle-aged men. One was a golden-haired man with cold, hawk-like eyes, while the other was a powerfully built red-haired man. These two followed solemnly behind Monroe Dawson. Without question, the two of them were both combatants of the ninth rank!

Behind Heidens, as well, there were two red-robed Cardinals, one male, one female. These two were Guillermo and Melina.

“Oh, Your Holiness.”

Monroe called out in an exaggeratedly loud voice as he attempted to bow. However, that large belly of Monroe’s made bowing an extremely difficult thing to do. “Monroe, please sit.” Heidens was still quite friendly to him.

Monroe immediately sat down, as did Heidens.

Monroe’s enormous butt was simply too big. Most chairs wouldn’t be a good fit for him. Fortunately, the Radiant Church had prepared a special chair for him in advance. Upon sitting down, a delighted grin split his rotund face, and he laughed loudly. “Thank you, your Holiness. On this trip, I had only intended to do some sightseeing near Greenstone Lake, but who would’ve thought that my son would insist on me hurrying over here? Alas, you should understand that as a father, I had no choice.”

“Monroe, you really do pamper little Yale,” Heidens said with a smile.

Monroe nodded helplessly. “Hehe, that little tyke. But I’ve heard Yale say that

he has an extremely incredible bro by the name of Linley. Not only is he a master sculptor, he is a genius magus, and also a very powerful warrior. When I heard this, I was very much impressed. But from what Yale says, this Linley has now been imprisoned within the Radiant Temple.”

“This is indeed the case.” Heidens nodded in acknowledgment.

Monroe chortled, “Your Holiness, can you give me some face and free Linley? Young people are always so impetuous. Although I know he attempted to assassinate Clayde, in the end, Clayde didn’t die, right? I’m sure that your Holiness wouldn’t care too much about a small matter like this.”

Monroe spoke casually and simply.

But Heidens couldn’t respond to him in as casual a manner.

This Monroe Dawson had gone so far as to explicitly ask Heidens to give him face. If Heidens refused, wasn’t that the same as directly refusing to give Monroe face? Although Monroe was grinning cheerfully, Heidens knew very well how powerful the Dawson Conglomerate standing behind Monroe was.

“Monroe.” Heidens shook his head. “It isn’t that I won’t give you face. It’s that it’s really not convenient for me to free him. Because... Linley killed several people from the Ecclesiastical Tribunal, including students of Osenno himself. Osenno is extremely angry this time.”

“Osenno?” Monroe Dawson frowned.

Osenno was one of the other pillars of the Radiant Church – the Praetor of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal.

In truth, it should be said that the Radiant Church actually had two leaders; the public leader known as the Holy Emperor, and the hidden leader in charge of killings, slaughters, and eliminating heathens and apostates – the Praetor of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal.

“This is going to be difficult.” Monroe immediately knew that this was not good.

Perhaps Heidens would care somewhat about Monroe’s status, but that cold fellow Osenno was nothing but a crazed killer.

But Monroe Dawson could also guess something.

“Linley killed the students of Osenno? These words are most likely a lie spun by Heidens, but there’s no way I’ll be able to verify this with Osenno.” Monroe felt helpless. He could tell that clearly, Heidens did not wish to let Linley go that easily.

The Dawson Conglomerate really did have its eyes set on Linley.

This was especially true after discovering that Linley was capable of Dragonforming. In terms of both his potential as a magus as well as a warrior, Linley’s potential was incredible. Once the Dawson Conglomerate acquired Linley, when Linley entered the Saint level, the influence of the Dawson Conglomerate would instantly supersede that of the other two trading unions.

“If that’s the case, then I’ll leave now.” Monroe Dawson immediately stood up.

Heidens smiled calmly. “I truly am sorry, Monroe. Right now, the Radiant Church has not internally decided on how we should punish Linley. After we have decided on how we should deal with Linley, I’ll send someone to inform you.”

“Sure. During this period of time, I’ll stay in Fenlai City. I really want to see the upcoming Yulan Festival. This 10000th Yulan Festival is sure to be an amazing spectacle. In a man’s entire life, he might only see such a spectacle this one time.” Monroe Dawson beamed as he spoke.

After speaking, Monroe Dawson departed with his two bodyguards.

Heidens quietly watched as Monroe Dawson departed. By his side, Guillermo said quietly, “Your Holiness, that damn fatty foolishly thinks he can claim Linley for his own. After the 28th, Monroe can abandon all of his hopes.”

Heidens turned to glance at Guillermo. Smiling, he left the hall as well.

Right now, the only thing to do was to wait for December 28th.

## The Divine Boon Descends

On the ninth floor of the Radiant Temple.

Linley seemed to have been discarded here and forgotten. The only people who came were the cold, grim purple-robed Executors of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal who came each day bringing his meals. His arms and legs both broken, Linley's only choice was to squirm over then lower his head to the food.

Within the dark, gloomy cell, one such day after another passed.

Life? Or death?

Linley didn't know which it would be, but Linley wouldn't so easily give up any hope of staying alive.

These past few days, Linley had spent his time reviewing why his attempt at gaining revenge this time had failed. Almost everything had been within his calculations, and he even included the existence of Clayde's magical beast companion in his plans. But Linley hadn't expected that Clayde would have a Saint-level magical barrier enchantment!

Producing a barrier enchantment was far more difficult than just casting a spell.

To produce a Saint-level barrier enchantment, the effort that needed to be expended in both spiritual energy and mageforce was greater than the effort needed to directly cast a Saint-level magical spell. Linley didn't believe that Clayde would have a Saint-level barrier enchantment on him.

Even Doehring Cowart had said: "Forget about Clayde. Most likely, even the Cardinals of the Radiant Church wouldn't have a Saint-level barrier enchantment on them."

Given Linley's power as a warrior of the ninth rank in Dragonform, and combined with Bebe's power, Clayde should've died without a doubt. Although

Linley was perhaps a bit too hasty in his plan to get revenge, he should've had a nearly 100% chance of success. Alas, that Fateguard enchantment ruined Linley's plans.

"Who would've thought that a mere ruler of a kingdom would have a Saint-level barrier enchantment!" Linley was still unable to accept it.

He really just couldn't.

The temperature of these winter nights was now extremely cold. There were very few people on the streets of Fenlai City. A black Shadowmouse was standing in a corner of an intersection, staring up at the tall and far-off Radiant Temple. The little Shadowmouse just stood there and stared, not moving at all.

That entire night, the little Shadowmouse remained there staring, even after the sun began to rise.

He didn't dare to enter the Radiant Temple, because he knew very well that the Radiant Temple was a place where even Saint-level combatants feared to tread. He, a rat-type magical beast, wouldn't be able to escape. If in the end he was captured as well, Linley would only be even more heartbroken.

It was day now.

"Boss, I will definitely avenge you." Bebe glanced at the Radiant Temple one final time, then with a flicker, disappeared.

Over the past twenty days, the Shadowmouse, Bebe, had been thinking about how to avenge Linley. But he discovered that Clayde was now as cautious as a bird which had been frightened by the twang of a bow. Not only did he order magi to lay multiple magical formations around him, he also ordered Kaiser to constantly remain by his side. The little Shadowmouse didn't have any chance to ambush him at all.

However, Bebe was very patient.

He would wait, continue to wait patiently. He would wait for the day when Clayde let down his guard, and then suddenly appear and chew Clayde into a meaty paste, avenging Linley.

Midnight, December 28th.

“Clank!”

The door to Linley’s holding cell swung open, and two Vicars stepped in. They didn’t seem as cold and sinister as the Executors of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal, and they even brought a gurney. Very carefully, they placed Linley on top of the gurney, and then lifted the gurney with Linley on top of it.

“What are you doing?” Linley coldly looked at the two Vicars.

Recollecting how Linley had slaughtered people in the past, the two Vicars felt some fear in their hearts towards him.

“Lord Linley, the Holy Emperor is preparing to treat your injuries,” a female Vicar said in a soft voice.

“Treat my injuries?”

Linley’s heart stirred. “Can it be that the Holy Emperor really is going to let me live?” Linley didn’t say anything else, maintaining his silence. He allowed the two Vicars to carry him further upstairs into the top of the Radiant Temple. One floor after another...

Finally, the two Vicars carrying Linley arrived at the top floor of the Radiant Temple. Currently, this floor was very empty. In the middle of the room, there was a very complicated-looking octagram magical formation. In each of the eight corners of the octagram, there sat quiet, barefoot Ascetics with disheveled hair and sackcloth clothes. In the very center of the octagram stood the Holy Emperor Heidens, who was wearing an ornate white robe.

At the edges of this top floor, there were three Cardinals, and two Deputy Arbiters along with six Executors of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal. All of these people were combatants of the ninth rank. One could tell how powerful the Radiant Church was, for it to be able to summon so many combatants of the ninth rank.

“Put him down. You can leave now.” Guillermo spoke.

“Yes.” The two Vicars didn’t even dare to breathe loudly. Right now, within this very room, there were astonishingly powerful Ascetics, mysterious Executors of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal, three Cardinals, and two Deputy Arbiters.

These were all important, major figures.

After putting Linley down, the two Vicars hurriedly, respectfully departed, and the door once more was shut behind them.

Lying on the gurney, Linley swept the people present with his gaze. Linley could easily tell that every single person here possessed incredible, astonishing power, all at least of the ninth rank or higher. “Your Holiness, what are you intending?” Linley said in a hoarse voice.

Heidens glanced at Linley. Laughing calmly, he said, “Linley, although this time you committed a major offence, after the internal deliberations of the Church, we have decided to give you another chance. Right now, we are preparing to execute a joint spell and use it to help you heal your wounds in the best possible way.”

If Linley had any experience whatsoever with light magic, he would’ve quickly seen the gaps in Heidens claims.

“Grandpa Doebling, it seems like the Radiant Temple is planning something major.” Linley was conversing mentally with Doebling Cowart.

“What’s going on outside?” Doebling Cowart very prudently didn’t appear, not daring to reveal even a hint of his spiritual power.

Heidens was a peak-stage Saint-level combatant. If Doebling Cowart left the Coiling Dragon ring, the Holy Emperor would definitely discover him.

“There’s around twenty or so people outside, and even the weakest is at least of the ninth rank. There are eight Ascetics and the Holy Emperor standing in an octagram magical formation,” Linley reported.

Doebling Cowart had far more experience than Linley. “Linley, if they just wanted you to fully recover, a single Saint-level combatant using the Lifelight spell would be enough to fully heal you. There’s no need for them to do all of this. I think they must be planning to summon the divine energy of a Sovereign of Light. Otherwise, there’d be no need for them to cause such a commotion.”

There was more than one Sovereign of Light.

The Radiant Sovereign, however, was the most powerful one of them.

“Summoning the power of a Sovereign?” Linley was greatly shocked. “They intend to use the power of a Sovereign against me? What are they intending?”

“I’m not sure either.”

In Doehring Cowart’s era, both the Radiant Church and the Cult of Shadows were fairly small and weak. They were nothing more than two religions amongst many in the Pouant Empire. Back then, the Radiant Church also had very few experts, and couldn’t possibly produce as many as they did today.

“Your Holiness. It is time,” Guillermo said respectfully.

Heidens raised his head upwards, looking at the sky, then nodded.

“Let us begin,” Heidens said calmly.

A white light immediately began to emanate from the bodies of those eight Ascetics seated within the corners of the octagram, causing an extremely dense wave of light-style mageforce to flow into the center of the magical formation. The entire magical formation immediately grew bright. In front of Heidens, a golden holy scripture suddenly appeared, while Heidens himself slowly began to radiate a golden light.

Heidens opened the scripture to its first page.

“Lord, it is you who grant us everything,” Heidens said softly, but his voice rang out in the hearts of everyone present like a thunderclap. At the same time, the glow from the holy scripture brightened dramatically, and the amount of holy white light in the magical formation increased dramatically as well.

Two lines of light intersected.

“Crackle, crackle.”

A perfectly straight line of light shot upwards, piercing into and through the very tip of the Radiant Church, then continuing upwards into the dark night. Anyone in Fenlai City would be able to clearly see this holy white light, entwined with a golden light, penetrate into and past the clouds.

Within the top floor of the Radiant Temple.

Heidens suddenly turned to look at Linley. Linley felt as though an extremely dense power was lifting him up, causing him to slowly rise into the air. Linley



floated over to the middle of the magical formation, directly above Heidens' head.

"Lord, you take pity on and love the people of this world, and in turn, we must put our faith in you."

Heidens raised his head, an incomparably holy radiance emanating from his face.

"Rumble."

The air above the Radiant Temple began to tremble. A cloud of white light began to gather in the air above the Radiant Temple, covering an extremely large expanse of space. Many of the people in Fenlai City noticed it.

"If one betrays you, Lord, then you shall take everything from them. But those who place their faith in you, Lord, shall receive your benevolence and your love." Heidens flipped to the next page in the holy scripture. "Boom!"

The world shook. In the air above the Radiant Temple, the darkness of the night had been shattered by that exceedingly bright cloud of light. In the middle of the cloud of bright light, a single crack appeared in space, and a line of white light shot down from the crack at high speed.

"Swish!"

That line of white light carried with it a majestic presence that filled everyone's hearts with awe. It pierced straight through the tip of the Radiant Chapel before finally landing on Linley, who was hovering in the air above the magical formation.

Within the top floor of the Radiant Chapel.

Heidens, the eight Ascetics, the three Cardinals, the two Deputy Arbiters, and the six special Executors all raised their heads, looking at Linley. The majestic power that line of white light embodied filled even the heart of Heidens with awe and worship.

Although it was just a hint of divine power, this power came directly from the Radiant Sovereign himself.

The white light penetrated Linley's body, and Linley's entire body immediately

began to emanate that white light as well. At the same time, Linley's body began to heal at an astonishing speed. In the blink of an eye, Linley's shattered bones and wounds were all healed, and his physical condition was restored to a better than ever condition.

"Ah!"

Linley's soul moaned. When that ray of white light had entered Linley's body, the healing effects had only been a side effect. The primary target of this ray of white light was Linley's soul. Clearly, this ray of white light wished to sink into and merge with Linley's soul.

Once this divine power merged with Linley's soul, then Linley would never again be able to shake off the control of the Radiant Sovereign, and would forever be his loyal vassal.

But just as this was happening...

An incomparably powerful force surged forth from the Coiling Dragon ring on Linley's finger. Passing through Linley's body, it rushed straight to Linley's brain. That terrifyingly powerful force surrounded the divine power in Linley's body and rapidly began to devour and dispel it.

And then, that burst of unimaginable power once more travelled through Linley's body and re-entered the Coiling Dragon ring.

"Grandpa Doebling, what is going on?" Linley said frantically.

"No idea. That force belonged to the Coiling Dragon ring itself. That force was terrifyingly powerful. It was terrifying... terrifying... terrifyingly powerful." Doebling Cowart was so shocked and nervous that he repeated the word 'terrifying' three times.

Doebling Cowart had been in possession of the Coiling Dragon ring five thousand years ago, but he had never had any inkling that such an unsurpassable power lay dormant within the ring.

Doebling Cowart was absolutely certain that if that power had been used to attack someone, even ten peak-stage Saint-level combatants would've been reduced to dust in the blink of an eye.

“Where did this burst of power come from, and what was it? Even I, the owner and master of this Coiling Dragon ring, was unable to sense it, much less control it.” Linley knew very well that this power was not so easily used. In the past, Doebling Cowart had worn and used this ring for over a thousand years when he was alive, but had never used or discovered this burst of power.

While this was occurring...

All of the people in the top floor of the Radiant Temple were astonished. The Holy Emperor Heidens, the eight Ascetics, the three Cardinals, the two Deputy Arbiters, and the six Executors all stared in disbelief. They could tell that Linley’s body didn’t show a single hint of having received the Divine Baptism. There wasn’t even a Radiant Seal on his forehead.

“How is this possible? It failed?” Heidens stared at Linley, stunned.

## Would Definitely Die?

All of the powerful people in the highest floor of the Radiant Temple were stunned. Linley's soul was a huge distance away from the level of crystallizing. He was nothing more than a magus of the seventh rank. Even an Arch Magus of the ninth rank wouldn't be able to resist the Divine Baptism of the Radiant Sovereign.

"How is this possible?" The Ascetics, Executors, and Deputy Arbiters all began to mumble amongst themselves, unable to believe what they had just seen.

"It actually failed. The Divine Boon actually failed to successfully create a new Blessed One. Then... how should we deal with this Linley?" Heidens stared at Linley, suspended in mid-air. "An absolute genius such as him will definitely be a peak-stage Saint-level combatant within a hundred years. He might even become more powerful than me. By that time, the glory of our Radiant Church will be able to spread across an even wider territory."

Heidens really couldn't bear to just kill Linley.

"Your Holiness?" Guillermo called out softly.

Heidens' lost, confused gaze suddenly sharpened. He had made his decision.

"Your Holiness, Linley hasn't become a Blessed One. Then we...?" Guillermo asked.

Heidens looked at Linley. Under his control, Linley's body slowly drifted down to the floor. At this point in time, Linley pushed himself to a standing position with his hands. Right now, Linley's body was totally uninjured. It must be said that receiving a Divine Boon had its benefits.

Linley looked at the mighty people surrounding him.

"These people are all combatants of the ninth rank at least. If I were to struggle against them, I wouldn't have any chance at all." Linley coldly stared at

Heidens and the others. “Your Holiness, what exactly are you intending to do with me?”

Suddenly, a smile appeared on Heidens face. “No need to ask too much. Executors, return Linley to his private room.”

“Yes, Your Holiness,” those six special Executors nodded.

Without giving Linley any chance to react, they immediately headed towards Linley, as one of them barked out, “Move! Or do you want us to drag you?”

They were forcing him by their actions. Linley had no options.

“Fine.” Linley opened the door and began to walk downwards. Those six Executors followed directly behind Linley. As Linley went down the stairs one level at a time, he saw that all of the guards, upon seeing those six Executors, were all extremely respectful.

Those six special Executors all wore bluish-violet robes. Those icy eyes of theirs stared at Linley, making him feel as though... if he acted untowardly in any way at all, they would immediately kill him.

After the six Executors had escorted Linley away, the female Cardinal, Melina, asked, “Your Holiness, that Linley didn’t become a Blessed One. Although we don’t know the reason why not, the decision we must come to right now is, what should we do with Linley?”

Guillermo and the others all looked at Heidens.

Linley was a genius. They all knew this. But Linley hadn’t become a Blessed One, and his mother had been killed by the Radiant Church. The Church had to come to a decision: Would they accept the risk of recruiting Linley and hide the truth behind the death of his mother? Or would Linley be put to death?

Although it would be possible to hide the truth behind his mother’s death for a time, once Linley entered the highest ranks of the Radiant Church, it would most likely be impossible to hide it any longer.

Heidens’ face was cold. In a cold voice, he said, “Kill.”

Guillermo and the others felt their hearts quiver.

“In a few more days, it will be the 10000 year anniversary of the Yulan

Festival. Let's arrange for Linley's execution to be after the festival," Heidens announced.

Guillermo, who had the closest relationship with Linley, sighed in his heart.

A genius who would have dominated the entire continent would now see his fate cut short. Guillermo knew very well that with Linley imprisoned in the Radiant Temple, there was no way Linley would be able to escape. Linley wouldn't even be able to leave his cell.

"That Cesar has some sort of a relationship with Linley, but even Cesar doesn't have the ability to break into the Radiant Temple to rescue Linley." Guillermo sighed secretly.

Linley would definitely die!

On the ninth floor of the Radiant Temple, within the private cell.

"Get in."

Linley entered the cell, and the six Executors closed the door behind him.

As the six Executors turned and immediately left, one of them, a silver-haired man, turned to look at Linley. "Kid, let me give you a reminder. Although you have recovered your strength, don't dream about breaking out of this cell."

The other five Executors halted as well, and a bald old Executor laughed, "Break out of the cell? Kid, if you are able to break out of this cell, that would mean your power is on the level of his Holiness himself."

"What do you mean?" Linley asked.

Linley himself couldn't see anything special about this cell. Given his power as a warrior of the ninth rank when Dragonformed, an ordinary stone cell would be shattered as easily as paper.

"The Radiant Temple is the most incredible edifice the Radiant Church possesses. The entire Temple itself hides a massive magical formation within it known as the Glory of the Radiant Sovereign. It's impossible for you to do the slightest bit of damage to it, whether from the inside or from the outside," That silver-haired man said proudly. "Kid, let me tell you, the only chance you have of breaking out from this cell is by breaking the lock on the cell door. I can also

tell you that the lock is made from metals that were alloyed with some adamantine.”

Finished speaking, the six Executors laughed loudly amongst each other, then left.

Linley was silent.

When he heard the words, ‘adamantine’, Linley understood that it was probably impossible for him to break out. According to legend, when the earth spell Earthguard reached the Deity level, the Earthguard armor would be composed of adamantine. Its power and durability was enough to be able to withstand several blows of even a Deity-level combatant. As for a Saint-level combatant, there was no way at all for them to break it.

Linley was an earth-style magus, and so naturally he knew about the legends regarding the Earthguard armor at its peak power.

Upon becoming a Saint-level Grand Magus, the Earthguard armor would be composed of diamonds, and upon breaking through to the Deity level, the armor would be of adamantine.

“Linley, I expect that this cell is used for the Radiant Church to imprison combatants of the ninth rank, or perhaps even the Saint level,” Doehring Cowart spoke. “Although this lock only has a trace amount of adamantine and isn’t pure adamantine, it would probably be hard for even a Saint-level combatant to break it.”

Linley nodded.

From the words of the Executors, he had already figured out that he would not be able to break out, as they had said that breaking out would demonstrate Linley’s power was at least on par with the Holy Emperor.

That next afternoon.

Monroe Dawson, Yale, Reynolds, and George were all seated together around a table covered with breakfast items. During this period of time, Yale, Reynolds, and George had never stopped being worried about Linley. But even Monroe Dawson making a personal appeal had failed. What could they possibly do?

Break into the Radiant Temple to rescue Linley? Even Monroe Dawson wouldn't dare to do such a thing.

"Yale, in two days, it'll be the Yulan Festival. This Yulan Festival will be the 10000th Yulan Festival, which we'll only see once in our lives. You three kids can have a nice, rowdy time." Monroe Dawson chortled.

Monroe Dawson had treated these two dear bros of his son Yale with the utmost friendliness.

This was because all three of Yale's bros were quite out of the ordinary. Linley, George, and Reynolds. Reynolds' clan possessed an astonishing amount of power in the O'Brien Empire's military. George's clan held tremendous influence within the Yulan Empire, and wasn't much weaker than the Leon clan.

As for Linley, although his clan was now weak, it was still the clan of the Dragonblood Warriors. And Linley's own potential was limitless.

Suddenly, the sound of footsteps.

"Milord Chairman, an emissary of the Radiant Church have arrived," a servant said respectfully.

Hearing the words "Radiant Church", the eyes of Yale, George, and Reynolds all lit up, and they turned to look at the servant. Monroe Dawson knew what his son was thinking, and he immediately instructed with a laugh, "Let them in."

"Yes."

A short while later, a Vicar walked in. He said respectfully, "Chairman Dawson. His Holiness instructed me to deliver this letter to you." As he spoke, he withdrew from within his clothes a beautifully, lavishly decorated letter.

The servant immediately accepted the letter, then gave it to Monroe Dawson.

Monroe Dawson immediately opened the letter. But upon seeing the contents of the letter, his face changed. He said coldly, "You can leave now."

That Vicar bowed slightly, then left.

"Father. What is in the letter?" Yale asked urgently. "Does it have to do with Third Bro?" Reynolds and George all looked hopefully at Monroe Dawson.



Monroe Dawson nodded.

“The Holy Emperor informs me that the internal deliberations of the Radiant Church have concluded. They will execute Linley in secret.” Monroe Dawson’s words were like thunder, ringing in the ears of Yale, Reynolds, and George, whose faces immediately turned white. They were stunned for a long moment.

“No, no way.”

Yale was the first to begin shouting. He snatched the letter from his father’s hands, and with shaking hands held it as he began to read. By his side, Reynolds and George both craned their necks to take a look as well. But when the three of them saw the contents, they all turned frantic with fear.

“No!!!”

Yale leapt out of his seat, intending to rush directly out of the hall. “Yale!” Monroe Dawson frowned, shouting coldly.

“Stop him,” Monroe Dawson ordered.

Yale turned his head to stare at his father. Frantic, he said, “Father, I beg you, lead some men to rescue Third Bro. If necessary, the Conglomerate can give up something valuable. I refuse to believe that the Radiant Church won’t care whatsoever about our Conglomerate. Father, I beg you.”

“Hmph, what do you know? If there really were terms that could be negotiated, the Holy Emperor would’ve started negotiating with me long ago. The grievance which Linley has with the Radiant Church clearly isn’t what we thought it was. Otherwise, the Radiant Church wouldn’t decide to execute a genius like him. Enough. Men, escort your young master to his room. Let him spend a good period of time calming down.”

Immediately, the guards escorted Yale back to his room. No matter how frantically or how angrily Yale protested, it was of no use.

Reynolds and George could only maintain their silence.

They didn’t have any special relationship with Monroe Dawson, after all. But in their hearts, they were frantic on Linley’s behalf.

A visitor had arrived at Linley’s cell. It was Guillermo.

“Guillermo.” Linley looked at Guillermo with some surprise.

Guillermo had brought with him an extremely lavish meal, and delivered it through the small opening in the cell door.

Guillermo looked at Linley. He let out a sigh. “Linley, I really viewed you very favorably. But... alas. Perhaps it was meant to be, that you couldn’t become a member of our Radiant Church. Alright, have a good meal. You won’t have many meals left.”

Hearing these words, Linley was stunned.

“Lord Guillermo, what do you mean by saying this?” Linley looked at Guillermo.

Guillermo let out a sigh. “In two days, which is to say, January 2nd, the last day of your existence will arrive.” Guillermo really did like this young man, Linley. Especially after finding out the reason why Linley attempted to assassinate Clayde, Guillermo felt all the more regretful for how Linley’s fate had turned out.

He could’ve had a glorious future, but for the sake of his parents’ deaths, he was willing to forsake everything in order to gain revenge.

Although he, Guillermo, would never have acted in such a way, in his heart, he still felt admiration for Linley.

“January 2nd?”

Linley’s facial expressions changed several times, but finally he closed his eyes. He already completely understood. Clearly, in two days, he would be put to death.

“Thank you, Lord Guillermo. If it wasn’t for you, I would’ve clung to the hope of surviving.” Linley laughed calmly.

Guillermo looked at Linley. With a low sigh, he shook his head, then turned his head, leaving Linley alone in his cell.

“January 2nd. They had to wait until after the Yulan Festival to kill me, eh? Tomorrow will be the Yulan Festival. I believe it will also be the day of Kalan and Alice’s marriage as well, right?” Knowing that he was about to die, Linley

somehow felt calmer and more at peace than he ever had before.

## A Giant Foot

The night between year 9999 and year 10000. The snow flew about as the temperature in Fenlai City dropped to an astonishing low. Within a cold cell in the Radiant Temple, Linley was resting against one of the icy stone walls of the cell.

Linley didn't notice the cold at all.

"I know that I am about to be put to death, but I don't have any ability to resist at all." Linley lowered his head, sighing softly.

He had made attempts, had tried.

But this cell was exactly as the Executor had described. It possessed incredible endurance, and even in Dragonform Linley was not able to break the lock or the room in the slightest. All he could do was quietly wait for the sentence which was soon to be carried out.

The dark night went by quickly, and that great blizzard finally came to an end as well. Both the nobles as well as the commoners were celebrating, in their own ways, the arrival of this 10000th Yulan Festival on this glorious, cloudless day. In particular, the Radiant Temple.

On this day, in the air above the Radiant Temple, countless beautiful mirages and illusions created by magical formations were on display.

In the Holy Capital, Fenlai City, today was a day for a sea of celebrations. That massive plaza in front of the Radiant Temple was filled to the brim with people who hailed from all sorts of places. Everyone was calling out in excitement to each other over this 10000th Yulan Festival, and the Radiant Temple organized many lively activities as well.

Yale, Reynolds, and George were within the third floor of a hotel. They stared at the far-away Radiant Temple Plaza. The plaza was covered densely by people,

a veritable sea of people.

“Boss Yale, are we going to go to the wedding ceremony of the Debs clan today?” George asked.

The wedding of Kalan of the Debs clan was on Yulan Day. Today was an extremely propitious day, and there were many families in Fenlai City holding wedding ceremonies on this day. These sorts of weddings would start at noon, and continue until nightfall.

“Yes. Of course.” Yale had an ugly look on his face.

Due to Linley’s affairs, Yale, George, and Reynolds were all in low spirits.

“Hmph, Third Bro was too soft-hearted towards that bitch and that punk Kalan. But now, Third Bro is going to be executed, while that bitch and that punk Kalan are going to be enjoying themselves and hold a wedding ceremony.” Yale was burning with rage.

He had never looked kindly upon Alice and Kalan.

Especially right now, with Linley on the verge of being executed, and himself unable to save him. He had no place to vent his frustrations and anxiety. This only made him now view Alice and Kalan even more unfavorably.

“Right. They want their wedding to go smoothly? In their dreams!” Reynolds ground his teeth as well.

Even George felt a desire to wreck this wedding.

Yale, George, and Reynolds had all been consumed by worry for Linley for days now. Knowing that Linley was about to die, but not having the ability to rescue him, they couldn’t help but think back to all the years they had spent together growing up. They hated themselves all the more for not having the power to save him.

And right at this time, Alice, who had discarded Linley, was now going to get married to Kalan.

How could these three just let it slide?

On Greenleaf Road, the Deb’s clan’s manor.

At noon, one noble or magnate after another arrived at the Debs clan's manor. Although after the smuggling case, the Debs clan was no longer one of the topmost clans of the Kingdom of Fenlai, they were still a clan with some influence. At least, in the Kingdom of Fenlai, they could still be ranked amongst the top twenty. "Lord Count Juneau has arrived!"

"Lord Baron Prey has arrived!"

Nobles, noble ladies, affluent girls, all entered the manor of the Debs clan. The leader of the Debs clan, Bernard, welcomed them all in a very friendly manner. The Debs clan's power had shrunk dramatically, but within the Kingdom of Fenlai, they were still able to remain standing on fairly stable footing.

"Lord Duke Bonalt has arrived!"

Hearing the words 'Duke Bonalt', many nobles turned to look at the door. Even Bernard immediately hurried over to welcome him. Right now, the highest ranking person attending this wedding ceremony would be Duke Bonalt. Last time, at the engagement ceremony, even King Clayde, the ruler of Fenlai, had come. But this time, for the wedding proper, his Majesty did not come.

Everyone knew the reason why.

"Lord Duke, your attendance brings great honor and joy to our Debs clan," Bernard said humbly.

Duke Bonalt nodded.

After the assassination attempt at Linley's manor, the Right Premier Merritt had died. Although Clayde had promoted another important minister to the rank of Right Premier, in terms of influence, there was no way he could compare for now with Merritt, who had been Right Premier for decades.

What's more, the Minister of Finance, Patterson, was also dead. Right now, in the entire Kingdom of Fenlai, perhaps the most powerful, influential figure aside from the ruler was this Left Premier, Duke Bonalt.

"Kalan, come and pay your respects to Duke Bonalt," Bernard immediately called out.

Kalan was dressed very handsomely today. The pure black tailored suit he was wearing made him the most outstanding-looking young man present. Kalan very modestly bowed in front of Duke Bonalt. “Duke Bonalt, welcome to my wedding.”

“Congratulations, Kalan,” Duke Bonalt said with a casual laugh. But just at this moment...

“Young master Yale of the Dawson Conglomerate has arrived!”

When these words rang out, Bernard’s eyes immediately lit up, and even Duke Bonalt headed over alongside him. These other nobles of Fenlai naturally couldn’t compete with the Dawson Conglomerate. The Dawson clan of the Dawson Conglomerate was one of the most powerful clans within the entire Yulan continent.

Yale, dressed in a sleek black suit.

Reynolds, dressed in a handsome blue suit.

George, dressed in a faintly checkered white suit.

The three walked in, shoulder to shoulder, causing all the watching nobles to stare at them with bright eyes. Generally speaking, magi would have a certain aura about them. This was because magi often entered the meditative state, resulting in them being very much in sync with natural elemental essence. That, combined with their powerful spiritual energy, gave them a certain aura.

In addition, Yale, George, and Reynolds all belonged to ancient clans. Clearly, their refinement and aura could not be matched by the likes of most nobles in Fenlai.

“Young master Yale, welcome! And these two are?” Bernard could tell at a single glance that these two definitely weren’t from any ordinary clans either.

Yale laughed calmly. “These two are my two dear bros from the Ernst Institute.”

Reynolds courteously said, “Mr. Bernard, I am from the Dunstan clan of the O’Brien Empire. You can address me as Reynolds.”

“The Dunstan clan?”

Both Bernard and Duke Bonalt were startled. Everyone present with some experience knew of the fame of the Dunstan clan. The Dunstan clan was an extremely powerful clan within the O'Brien Empire, a clan which controlled an exceedingly powerful military force.

"Young master Reynolds, our Debs clan warmly welcomes your arrival!" Bernard said excitedly.

The arrival of a young master from the Dunstan clan naturally gained a great deal of face to Bernard. Nearby, Kalan also bowed very courteously. But it was clear that the difference between him and a descendant of one of the great clans was extremely large.

"And this is?" Bernard looked towards George.

George smiled. "Mr. Bernard, I come from the Walsh clan of the Yulan Empire."

"The Walsh clan?" The hearts of all the nearby nobles thumped hard. The Walsh clan was an ancient clan with thousands of years of history. In the Yulan Empire, they possessed tremendous influence, and was pretty much on the same level as the Leon clan of Dixie and Delia.

"Young master George, your arrival today brings exceptional honor to our Debs clan." Bernard was extremely humble.

Both the Walsh clan and the Dunstan clan were extremely powerful clans from the Four Great Empires. They were clans which could influence the internal strategies of their respective empires. Even before the fall, the Debs clan couldn't compare with the likes of these clans, much less the current Debs clan.

The wedding ceremony of the Debs clan was a very lively affair. Many nobles as well as many young noble ladies wanted to strike up conversations with Yale, George, and Reynolds. In the eyes of those young noble ladies, even if they abandoned the thoughts of becoming a principal wife, if they could become even just a secondary wife to one of those three, their clans would receive countless benefits.

As for the original center of attention, Kalan, much less attention was now



paid to him.

But there were three people whose attentions were focused on him. Yale, Reynolds, and George.

“Look. Miss Alice and Miss Rowling have arrived.” Suddenly, a voice rang out in the hall. Right now, the two female leads had appeared, dressed in beautiful wedding gowns. They entered from a side door, and Kalan immediately went to go welcome them. Very naturally, both Alice and Rowling slipped their arms around Kalan’s.

At this time, Yale, Reynolds, and George finally acted.

“Haha, Kalan, these two must be your wives, right? They really are beautiful!” Reynolds was the first to laugh and walk over.

Seeing them walk over, Kalan immediately headed towards them with his two wives. “Rowling, Alice, pay your respects to these three young masters. This is young master Reynolds of the Dunstan clan, and this is—”

But halfway through his words, George let out a cry of surprise, shouting out loudly, “Alice?! You’re getting married to this Kalan?”

George’s shout was very loud. These words caused the entire hall to fall silent.

To say something like this at someone’s wedding ceremony was far too impolite.

“Right, Alice, aren’t you dating our Third Bro?” Reynolds added.

It was Yale’s turn to speak. “Second Bro, Fourth Bro, you two didn’t know this, but this Alice has already broken up with Third Bro. She’s going to get married with this Kalan now.”

“She broke up with Third Bro?”

George and Reynolds both shook their heads, sighing.

Reynolds then immediately said, “Alice, since you abandoned our Third Bro to be together with this Kalan fellow, then you definitely will be his principal wife, right?”

“Actually, no. The principal wife is this Miss Rowling. This was already proclaimed at the engagement ceremony,” Yale immediately said.

These two sentences made Alice’s face turn scarlet, while the look on Kalan’s face was extremely awkward as well. But not a single person in the entire hall dared to berate Yale, Reynolds, or George for their discourtesy. Given their statuses, who would dare?

“Three young masters, we have to toast our guests. Please excuse us.” Kalan forcibly suppressed the rage in his heart and spoke modestly.

“Alright,” Reynolds nodded as well.

Kalan immediately led Rowling and Alice towards other tables. Yale, George, and Reynolds only coldly watched him depart. Thinking about how Linley was probably going to be executed soon, their hearts were filled with even more rage at the injustice of it all.

Suddenly...

“Bam!” “Bam!” “Bam!”

A terrifying series of sounds could be heard from outside. It was a low, somber sound that made the earth tremble with each vibration, and all of the utensils in the hall were knocked to the floor.

“What’s going on outside?” A nobleman in the hall stood up in surprise.

“Rowling, Alice, stay put.” Kalan immediately ran out of the main hall with his father, and many other nobles ran out as well. They wanted to see what exactly was going on outside, for such a huge ruckus to be caused.

Reynolds, Yale, and George also headed outside, curious.

But right at this moment...

“BAM!”

A giant foot suddenly descended from the heavens, landing directly in the front courtyard of the Debs clan’s manor. That giant foot just happened to land directly on Kalan and Bernard, who had just entered the front courtyard. The sound of bone splintering could be heard as the two of them, father and son, were immediately smashed into a meaty paste. The ground was stained with

their blood.

That foot was over four meters long, and was covered with thick golden fur.

“Ah!” Many people raised their heads to stare at the monster.

This was an enormous golden-furred ape, at least twenty or thirty meters tall, the size of an eight-floor tall building. This gigantic golden ape’s eyes were like a pair of giant purple carriage wheels. The giant golden ape’s body seemed to be brimming with power, causing the very air around it to shudder.

“Violet-Eyed Goldfur Ape! A Saint-level magical beast, the Violet-Eyed Goldfur Ape!” Seeing this magical beast, Yale couldn’t help but stare at it, his jaw slack.

That Violet-Eyed Goldfur Ape raised its head, letting out an excited howl, and spoke in the human tongue, “Haha, kill, haha, kill them for me! Kill them all! The more you kill, the greater the rewards the King will give you! Haha, kill!”

“Bam.” “Screech!”

Yale, George, and Reynolds could suddenly hear the howls and cries of magical beasts from all directions, as though the entire world had suddenly been filled with them. Suddenly, Yale, George, and Reynolds saw that the entire sky had been filled with countless, innumerable flying magical beasts!

“Dragonhawks! These are Dragonhawks! This...” Reynolds was stunned and slack jawed as well.

From far away, an enormous flock of Dragonhawks had appeared, covering the entire sky with their presences. The density of Dragonhawks was so high that there was no way to count their number.

Suddenly, everyone felt as though the day of the apocalypse had descended upon them. Right now, no one could be bothered to grieve or feel pity for Kalan and Bernard, who had been crushed to a pulp by that giant foot of the Violet-Eyed Goldfur Ape.

## Apocalypse Day

“What on earth is going on?”

Yale, Reynolds, and George were all stunned. Just moments ago, they were participating in a wedding banquet, but then all of a sudden, a giant Violet-Eyed Goldfur Ape had dropped out of the sky, apparently with a huge host of magical beasts behind him. That incredibly super massive flock of Dragonhawks in the sky was terrifying to behold.

Not only were the three bros stunned; all of the people within the City of Fenlai were stunned.

“Get out, now!” Yale immediately shouted.

Yale, George, and Reynolds hurriedly fled from the Debs clan’s manor. Fortunately, the Violet-Eyed Goldfur Ape didn’t pay any attention to the three of them, because there were simply too many people running about in Fenlai City. Someone worthy of the Violet-Eyed Goldfur Ape noticing would have to be at least a combatant of the ninth rank or a Saint-level combatant.

“Young master.” The vast majority of the guards of the Dawson Conglomerate had undergone training in the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, and so were able to maintain their calm despite seeing that vast number of magical beasts descend upon them.

“Quick, to my father!”

Yale immediately shouted.

Escorted by the Dawson Conglomerate bodyguards, Yale, Reynolds, and George quickly rushed back to the Dawson Conglomerate’s headquarters. On the way back, Yale noticed that there were a huge number of flying magical beasts already within the City of Fenlai. Not only were there Dragonhawks, there were also Winged Pegasi.

There were also magical beasts of the seventh rank such as Thunderwing Pegasi and Blue-eyed Thunderhawks, and magical beasts of the eighth rank such as Golden Sunhawks as well as various giant dragons.

Both the skies and the streets of Fenlai City were covered with massive magical beasts. The apocalypse had descended on Fenlai City, and there was no way to fend it off. Even the weakest of the giant flying dragons was a magical beast of the eighth rank. Over a hundred giant flying dragons had come to attack. Who could stop them?

Even the Eight Ace Regiments of the Radiant Temple would see their numbers cut in half from a single combined fiery blast from those hundred plus dragons.

“Apocalypse. Apocalypse!”

The entire Fenlai City had already sunken into a mass of fires and floods. But the dwellers of Fenlai City didn’t know that these magical beasts made up only a fraction of the total number coming... The magical beasts on the ground far outnumbered the flying beasts, only in terms of speed, of course the flying magical beasts were much faster and had arrived first.

Thus, the flying magical beasts had led the attack as the vanguard.



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The soldiers standing on the walls of Fenlai City were all stunned. This was the 10000th anniversary of the Yulan Festival. Just earlier, during lunch, they had all celebrated by drinking alcohol, but now, all they could see were endless numbers of magical beasts.

And in front of them...

“Magical beasts. So many. So many...” Those soldiers were all speechless.

The earth was shaking. Outside the City of Fenlai, an army of hundreds of thousands of Windwolves were charging towards the city at high speed. Just the very sight of those hundreds of thousands of Windwolves charging at them en masse was enough to freeze the blood of the watchers.

“Where are the magi?! Magi!”

“Magicannons! Load the magicannons!”

The army officers all began shouting loudly, trying to do their best to get their soldiers ready. In reality, they also knew that struggling was hopeless, because a huge number of winged magical beasts had already descended within the heart of Fenlai City.

“Captain, what is that?” Suddenly, a soldier stared speechlessly at the skies.

The captain looked in that direction as well and saw that up in the air, there was an enormous magical beast that was speeding towards them. This magical beast had no wings at all, but it sliced through the air as it flew towards them at astonishing speed.

“Flying in the air. This is... this is a Saint-level magical beast... A Saint-level magical beast!”

That captain now understood that there really was no chance at all.

“Groaaaaaaaaaaaaaawr!”

At the same time, far away from Fenlai City, a terrifying roar could be heard. A huge form passed through the horde of Windwolves at high speed, moving so fast that it was at least ten times speedier than the Windwolves. It probably wasn't much slower than the Saint-level beast flying in the sky.

This was an enormous beast, at least thirty meters tall. Physically, it looked exactly like an enormous lion, except its eyes were bloody red!

A magus on the walls of Fenlai City screamed, “Saint-level magical beast, Bloody-eyed Maned Lion! Heavens, another Saint-level magical beast! It's a Bloody-eyed Maned Lion! Amongst behemoth-type monsters, only the Golden Behemoth is a match for it!”

Everyone was stunned.

There was no way they could match it in power.

“Haha! Bloody, why are you, a Saint-level magical beast, running on the ground?” The giant beast flying in the air spoke with words that sounded like booming thunder.

Quite a few soldiers below raised their heads to look up.

“It’s speaking in human tongues! So it’s true that Saint-level magical beasts can speak in human tongues!” This was the first time anyone present had ever personally encountered a Saint-level magical beast, much less two of them! By now, they could tell what the magical beast in the air looked like.

The body of the Saint-level magical beast above was obsidian black, and it looked like a dragon, but without wings.

“Saint-level magical beast, Tyrant Wurm! A hegemon amongst dragons!” Another magus cried out in terror.

Dragons were primarily divided into two types. The first type was the winged dragons, such as the eighth-ranked Emerald Dragons and Fire Dragons, or the ninth-ranked Silver Dragons, Black Dragons, and Frost Dragons, or the Saint-level Gold Dragons, Prismatic Dragons, and Bloodgem Dragons.

The other type was the wingless dragons, such as the seventh-ranked Velocidragons, the ninth-ranked Armored Razorback Wyrms and Stegowyrms, or the Saint-level Thunder Lizards, Tyrant Wyrms, and Triceratops Wyrms.

The main difference between winged dragons and wingless dragons lay in the power of their bodies.

The wingless dragons possessed immense power within their bodies. The Armored Razorback Wyrms, the Stegowyrms, the Thunder Lizards, and the Tyrant Wyrms all possessed incredibly durable bodies that were stronger than winged dragons of the same rank.

“Hmph, enough chitchat. Let’s compete and see who can kill the most,” the Bloody-eyed Maned Lion’s terrible voice growled out, shaking the earth with its echoes.

“Fine!” The Tyrant Wurm roared in response.

Instantly, that enormous, hundred-meter plus body of the Tyrant Wurm descended from the heavens, aiming directly at the city walls. The walls of Fenlai City were extremely sturdy, and were covered with countless powerful magical formations. But because there were too many flying magical beasts present, there was no way to activate the magical barriers without interference.

“Do you think you can run faster than me?” The Bloody-eyed Maned Lion roared angrily as well, increasing its speed still further.

These two terrifying, massive beasts charged towards the city, one from the air, another from the ground. The walls protecting Fenlai City were over ten meters thick. Walls that thick were definitely capable of defending against enemy armies, but facing two such terrifying magical beasts...

After all, Tyrant Wyrms and Bloody-eyed Maned Lions could only be matched by peak-stage Saint-level human combatants!

“Bam!”

At virtually the exact same instant, the Tyrant Worm and the Bloody-eyed Maned Lion slammed into the wall. Under the attack of these two Saint-level massive magical beasts, the ten-meter-thick wall was only able to serve as a slight, momentary impediment. And then, in the next heartbeat, the section of the wall blocking them collapsed entirely.

“Boom!”

Those two parts of the wall exploded, sending rubble flying everywhere. The rubble alone killed many people.

“Growwwwwwr!”

The Bloody-eyed Maned Lion and the Tyrant Wurm excitedly charged towards the heart of Fenlai City. Given their astonishing speed, most people would be unable to dodge out of the way of their charge. Their massive weight and the force of each step would most likely heavily injure even a warrior of the ninth rank. A warrior of the eighth rank would die from being stepped on, no question at all.

“Hoooooowl!”

Hundreds of thousands of Windwolves charged forward, like the boundless waves of the sea, charging through the openings created by the two Saint-level magical beasts. Other Windwolves just leapt directly into the air, bypassing the wall entirely. Windwolves possessed incredible leaping abilities, after all, and were able to leap 20-30 meters in a bound. These walls were totally useless in stopping them.



Hundreds of thousands of Windwolves had entered Fenlai City...

“Rumble, rumble, rumble.”

The earth continued to shake with thunder-like galloping sounds. Behind the Windwolves were countless numbers of different types of land-based magical creatures. There were Mastodons and other creatures far more terrifying than Windwolves. Those soldiers who had been lucky enough to survive, staring at that massive flood of magical beasts, got to know what true despair was.

“The Holy Capital is finished,” staring off at into the distance, a soldier hiding in a corner of the walls said in despair.

“Crunch.”

A Windwolf suddenly appeared next to him and bit his head off in a single bite.



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A cell in the ninth floor of the Radiant Temple.

“What is going on?” Linley climbed to his feet. He could feel the ground shaking and hear the thunderous roars, howls, as well as screams of misery from outside. Having stayed so long within the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, Linley could tell just from listening to the sounds what sorts of magical beasts had arrived.

“Why are there so many magical beasts here? They seem to be everywhere.” Linley was thoroughly amazed.

“Boom!”

A terrifyingly powerful force struck against the Radiant Temple. All the walls of the Radiant Temple suddenly began to glow with a dim light. Despite having received such a tremendous blow, the Radiant Temple had managed to withstand it.

“This Radiant Temple’s defense is really something,” a deep, thick voice growled from outside. The power and strength of that voice was such that even

in his cell, Linley could clearly hear each word.

“Someone is attacking the Radiant Temple?”

Linley found it somewhat hard to believe. The Holy Union was one of the six major powers, and the Radiant Church had existed for millennia. In all that time, no one had ever dared to attack the Radiant Temple. But given the attack just then, as well as that loud voice, someone had definitely just attacked the Radiant Temple.

“KING!”

Suddenly, in unison, several rough voices rang out loudly. There was definitely more than one loud voice!

“Stop!” An angry bellow.

“That’s the Holy Emperor.” Linley could clearly tell it was him, but right after the Holy Emperor’s voice rang out, there was a—

“BAM!”

A terrifyingly powerful force descended upon the Radiant Temple, causing the entire Radiant Temple to shake violently. The light shining from the myriad complicated magical patterns covering the Radiant Temple began to flicker and shudder, while on the walls of the Temple, cracks began to emerge.

“How terrifying.” Doebling Cowart sighed in amazement. “A single attack was enough to nearly collapse the entire Radiant Temple.”

“BAM!”

Yet another terrifying strike. This time, even the giant magical formation covering the Radiant Temple, the Glory of the Radiant Sovereign, wasn’t able to withstand it. With an exploding sound, the Radiant Temple split open at the middle, and the top eight floors of the Radiant Temple collapsed.

“The protective magical formation was destroyed.” Linley could feel his cell beginning to shift about, as if it were sliding down.

Linley was both amazed and overjoyed. Before this, the cell walls were extremely sturdy, because any force used against it would be absorbed by the entire magical formation. But now, the magical formation itself had been

destroyed! Linley's hands transformed into a pair of draconic claws, and he immediately smashed a giant hole into the walls with five or six punches.

Linley immediately burst out from within the hole he had just created.

"Bloodviolet Godsword!" When Linley had been seized, the Bloodviolet Godsword had been taken from him by the Radiant Church. But since the Bloodviolet Godsword had already been personalized and bound by Linley long ago, with a mental command by Linley, it began to fly towards his direction, arriving in Linley's hands shortly afterwards.

By now, the Radiant Temple was in a state of chaos. No one could be bothered to worry about Linley.

With a tap of the foot, Linley sent himself leaping down into the plaza below. Right now, the Radiant Temple Plaza was littered with corpses. Far too many had just died. There were many people engaged in battle against magical beasts as well.

"So many people."

Linley was totally stunned.

The skies were filled with countless types of flying magical beasts — Dragonhawks, Bluewind Hawks, Winged Pegasi, Thunderwing Pegasi, Emerald Dragons, Fire Dragons, Black Dragons... all sorts of dragons. The sight of these creatures blocking out the sky with their mass was enough to freeze anyone's heart.

And the numbers of magical beasts on the ground were even more astonishing.

"Is that...?"

Linley stared in the direction of the Radiant Temple. In the air directly above it, there were over ten enormous magical beasts.

"A Savage Worldbear... Bloody-eyed Maned Lion... Electrobolt Panther... Thunderwing White Tiger... Thunder Lizard... Tyrant Wurm..." Linley saw one legendary Saint-level magical beast after another, all hovering in the air above the Radiant Temple. He was utterly stupefied at the number of Saint-level

magical beasts that had just appeared.

What's more, the person leading these Saint-level magical beasts seemed to be a human.

He was a very devilish looking young man, wearing a dim gold robe, with a strange slit-like scar on his forehead. This devilish young man was coldly, calmly looking at Heidens and Heidens' forces. Heidens, Mr. Fallen Leaf, and five other Saint-level human combatants were all standing in mid-air, staring back at the young man. Clearly, the Radiant Church's side was in very bad shape.

"You..." Heidens and the other humans were furious.

"I really am so sorry for disturbing you on your Yulan Festival, but I must inform you that your Radiant Church needs to go find another place to be your Holy Capital," the devilish young man said calmly.

Linley could clearly hear these words, and he couldn't help but be secretly be shocked at how terrifying this young man was.

"Boss, boss!" Linley suddenly heard Bebe's voice ringing out in his mind. Linley could sense Bebe's location, and he couldn't help but turn to look at him. He saw a black blur pass through the massive throng of people and magical beasts. Shortly afterwards, the blur arrived, and with a leap it threw itself directly into Linley's arms.

"Bebe." Linley felt extremely moved.

"Boss." In Linley's arms, Bebe was also so moved that his little eyes turned moist.

## Deity-Level Combatant

There were magical beasts both inside and outside of Fenlai City. Countless numbers of magical beasts. This city, which had just been celebrating the 10000th Yulan Festival, now found itself having run into the day of the Apocalypse. Deaths were happening constantly, and the population of this Holy Capital, Fenlai City, was dropping at a terrifying rate.

Both the higher ups of the Radiant Temple as well as the commoners were fleeing for their lives from the magical beasts.

“Quick, quick, stop dawdling!”

Duke Bonalt roared furiously. Right now, Duke Bonalt didn’t give a damn about his ‘king’. He only led his own family out of his Duke’s manor, along with ten of his most powerful guards, immediately fleeing towards the outside of the city. The only thing he had on him was a few magiccrystal cards.

They were fleeing for their lives!

“Father, let’s go rescue Nessa,” pleaded Duke Bonalt’s son Albert.

“You bastard, if you want to live, then follow me!” Duke Bonalt howled furiously. “Let’s go!”

Duke Bonalt paid no more attention to his son, and immediately led his wife and his other children out. As for Albert, he hesitated there for a moment, then ground his teeth and pulled out his sword as he ran in the other direction.

“You ungrateful whelp!” Duke Bonalt swore, but in his heart, he was extremely grieved.

But Duke Bonalt knew very well that right now, Fenlai City was covered with magical beasts. Magical beasts of the seventh rank could appear at any time, and even magical beasts of the eighth rank and ninth rank were not rare. Right now, if they didn’t immediately flee the city, they wouldn’t have a chance at

surviving.

“Son, forgive your father,” Duke Bonalt said to himself, while at the same time, he shouted at his guardsmen. “Quick, let’s leave Fenlai City! Once we’ve reached safety, each person will receive thirty thousand gold coins!” At a time like this, Duke Bonalt was not going to be stingy.

“Yes, Lord Duke!” The guardsmen exulted. Thirty thousand gold coins was more than enough for them to live out their lives carefree.

But after travelling just two or three kilometers, they had already encountered and killed two magical beasts of the seventh rank, five magical beasts of the sixth rank, and three magical beasts of the fifth rank.

“Groooooowl!”

A ten-meter-high black bear began to run at them at high speed from far away, each step causing the earth to shake. All of the faces of the guardsmen turned white after seeing the black bear. Duke Bonalt shouted loudly, “Quickly, flee! That’s a Violet Tattooed Bear! Quickly!”

An adult Violet Tattooed Bear was generally a magical beast of the ninth rank.

The Saint-level Violet Tattooed Bear which Linley had encountered in the Foggy Valley within the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts was a particularly strong representative of its kind.

“Groooooowl!” The Violet Tattooed Bear clearly had its eyes set on Duke Bonalt’s group, and it continued running towards them, causing both the earth and the hearts of Duke Bonalt’s group to shake. The Violet Tattooed Bear was running in a totally direct line towards them. Anything that got in its way was smashed.

“Bam!” With a wave of its arm, a three-story-high building was disintegrated, showering Duke Bonalt’s group with rubble.

“Smash!” A piece of rubble nearly half the size of a man came smashing down on one of the young daughters of Duke Bonalt. The pretty, delicate head of that girl was instantly transformed into a pile of mud-like meat paste, as blood and brain matter splattered across the stone and across the ground.

Duke Bonalt and his men didn't even have the chance to be angry or to be heartbroken, because immediately afterwards, the Violet Tattooed Bear slammed its huge paws down upon one of the guards, turning him into nothing more than ground meat.

"Ah!" Duke Bonalt suddenly realized that a giant foot was coming for him, and he frantically tried to roll away.

"WHAP!"

The Violet Tattooed Bear stepped on Duke Bonalt, killing him on the spot. If someone as weak as Duke Bonalt would have been able to avoid the attack of a Violet Tattooed Bear, then the Violet Tattooed Bear wouldn't have been worthy of being classified as a magical beast of the ninth rank.

"Groooooowl!" The Violet Tattooed Bear raised its head and roared, beating its chest with excitement, before turning and heading in a different direction to find more prey.



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Crushed to death. Swiped to death. Slapped to death. Bitten to death. This was extremely common and normal, now. Regardless of whether they were nobles or commoners, right now in Fenlai City, life was a very fragile thing. And so, one noble and commoner after another died.

Fenlai City was a scene of utter catastrophe.

And the place where the slaughter was the most ferocious... was the area around the Radiant Temple.

On the massive plaza in front of the Radiant Temple, the mighty Knights of the Radiant Temple as well as the Executors of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal were engaged in ferocious battle against the magical beasts. The defense here was the stiffest, and so even more magical beasts congregated here as well.

Linley and Bebe were in a corner of the Radiant Temple Plaza, but the two of them were very safe. This was because, given their current strength, they had nothing to fear as long as a Saint-level combatant didn't come attack them.

And right now, all the Saint-level combatants were in the skies above the Radiant Temple.

“Boss, there’s so many Saint-level magical beasts.” Bebe’s voice rang out in Linley’s mind.

Linley looked up again at the Saint-level magical beasts in the air above the Radiant Temple. Linley hadn’t expected that at a critical moment such as this, the Radiant Church was able to mobilize seven Saint-level combatants within Fenlai City.

“The Saint-level combatants which the Radiant Church officially acknowledges having can be counted on one hand. In truth, it has many powerful combatants lying hidden. This is just the Holy Capital, yet they already have seven Saint-level combatants. Most likely the total number of Saint-level combatants within the Holy Union is a good deal higher.”

Linley finally had an idea of what the highest levels of power within the continent were like.

The aura of a Saint-level combatant was enough to cause dread in lesser individuals. Any of the seven Saint-level humans in the air above could easily kill Linley, as though Linley were nothing but an ant. But right now, those seven Saint-level humans were at a definite disadvantage!

Magical beasts were naturally more powerful than humans.

For ordinary magical beasts, immediately upon reaching the Saint level, despite being early-stage Saint-level magical beasts, generally only middle-stage Saint-level human combatants would be a match for them. For those particularly powerful magical beasts that reached the Saint level such as the Armored Razorback Wurm, the Tyrant Wurm, or the Nine-Headed Serpent Emperor, upon reaching the Saint level, they could only be matched by a peak-stage Saint-level human combatant.

And right now...

Over ten Saint-level magical beasts stood in mid-air, and amongst them were a Bloody-eyed Maned Lion, a Tyrant Wurm, a Violet-Eyed Goldfur Ape, and other incredibly strong Saint-level magical beasts. Any one of them was capable



of fighting with the Holy Emperor head to head.

What was even more amazing was that in front of these magical beasts, there was that devilish ‘young man’.

“Are you a human, or are you...?” Heidens stared at that devilish young man.

The devilish young man glanced coldly at Heidens. “A human? How could I be a pathetic human? Humans are nothing more than food to us magical beasts!” The devilish young man’s words were loaded with absolute contempt. Even when looking at Heidens, he was filled with nothing but utter contempt.

“Haha, if our almighty King wished to kill you, it would be as easy as flipping over his hands. He’s giving you guys face. You’d best accept it. Haha...” That Violet-Eyed Goldfur Ape shouted loudly with laughter.

The expression on Heidens’ face changed dramatically, and so did the faces of the six Saint-level combatants behind him.

A magical beast that could take human form. What sort of power was this?

“Could it be that yet another Deity-level combatant has appeared on the Yulan continent? An invincible entity?” Heidens felt extremely sour. In the past, there had only been three individuals who had stood at the very peak of power in the Yulan continent; the ‘War God’ of the O’Brien Empire, the ‘High Priest’ of the Yulan Empire, and the ‘King’ of the Forest of Darkness.

Heidens didn’t imagine that the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts would suddenly produce its own ‘King’, who was able to take human form as well.

“Broke through the Saint level to reach the Deity level. A Deity-level magical beast. This...” Heidens knew very well how terrifying a Deity-level magical beast was. To this ‘King’, killing these seven human Saint-level combatants would be like child’s play.

Heidens instantly made his decision...

They had to retreat!

Right now, preserving as much power as remained to the Radiant Church was the most important thing of all. If it lost seven Saint-level combatants, the Radiant Church’s power would drop by at least half, and its status would drop

as well.

“A Deity-level magical beast. How could a Deity-level magical beast appear out of nowhere?” Heidens cursed to himself. He had no idea that this Deity-level magical beast had been accidentally released by Linley from within the Foggy Valley. And as it just so happened, when this Deity-level magical beast had implemented the plan he had been formulating for over half a year, he had accidentally saved Linley.

Fate truly was a strange thing.

“Mighty King of Magical Beasts, I am the Holy Emperor Heidens. Might I ask what you wish of me?” Heidens decided to submit.

The devilish young man smiled and nodded. “Your name is Heidens? Very well. What you need to do is lead your people and flee to the north. The magical beasts of my Mountain Range of Magical Beasts will also continue to expand to the north. When the day comes that my magical beasts feel they have enough territory, they will stop expanding.”

Heidens’ heart was filled with fury.

What sort of offer was this?

When they felt they had enough territory, they would stop expanding?

“Hmph, don’t worry. We won’t take over all of the territory belonging to your Holy Union. At most, we’ll take half. Right... as of right now, the Holy Capital of the Cult of Shadows has been destroyed by us as well,” The devilish young man said casually.

“The Holy Capital of the Cult of Shadows?” Heidens and the other six Saint-level combatants were all startled.

Could it be that the magical beasts of the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts had launched simultaneous attacks against both the Radiant Church as well as the Cult of Shadows? This was too insane! They knew that the magical beasts in the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts were quite numerous, and there were quite a few Saint-level magical beasts there as well. But they hadn’t imagined there would be enough to launch simultaneous assaults against two major powers.

“You can beat it now. Oh, and there’s one more thing I can tell you. My name... is Dylin,” The devilish young man said casually.

Hearing the conversation going on up above, Linley was totally stunned. Clearly, this horde of magical beasts wasn’t just attacking Fenlai City; it was attacking the entirety of both the Holy Union and the Dark Alliance. And judging from what the devilish young man was saying...

They intended to take over half of the territory of both the Holy Union and the Dark Alliance!

“Then it seems the twelve kingdoms and 32 duchies to the west of the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts are going to plunge into disaster.” Linley felt terrified.

“The King of the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, Dylin?”

Linley firmly imprinted this name, ‘Dylin’, into his memory. After having quietly listened for a while, Linley stealthily made his way through the crowds and departed, heading to his own residence at high speed. This was because he had left a number of things back at his manor.

“Hoooowl!” A powerfully built Windwolf noticed Linley and immediately lunged at him.

“Swish!”

A flash of violet light. Linley didn’t even pause or slow down, but that powerful Windwolf suddenly split in half, staining the ground with its blood. On the road back to his manor, Linley saw that the streets had become avenues of death and destruction. There were magical beasts everywhere.

But by the time Linley reached the intersection between the Fragrant Pavilion Road and the Greenleaf Road, Linley saw a squad of troops numbering thirty-something strong. Wherever this squad went, the magical beasts were unable to block them.

“Boss Yale?”

Linley suddenly saw that Yale was bound on the back of a powerful warhorse. “Second Bro and Fourth Bro are here as well. Only, they are riding their horses.”

“Father, let me go, let me go! Let me go save Third Bro! The Radiant Temple has already been demolished. This is our best chance to save him!” Tied up and bound, Yale continued to shout loudly from his position on the back of the warhorse. The person actually riding the warhorse was an extremely powerful looking red-haired man.

The feeling he gave Linley was that he wasn’t weaker than Kaiser at all.

“Shut your mouth.” Riding in the center of this convoy was an extremely fat man, who was wielding a giant battleaxe in his hands. It danced like a vicious blur in his hands, clearly possessing tremendous power.

“Father? Is that the Chairman of the Dawson Conglomerate?” Linley secretly mused.

With a few leaps, Linley reached the convoy in seconds.

“Boss Yale, Reynolds, George!” Linley shouted loudly.

Yale, who was in the middle of shouting, was startled, and he couldn’t help but turn to look. Reynolds and George, who had been maintaining their silence while riding, turned to look as well. Seeing the blood-splattered Linley, and that familiar-looking little Shadowmouse, Bebe, on his shoulders, the eyes of all three of them turned instantly red.

“Third Bro!”

All three of them cried out in joyful unison.

## Fleeing in Panic

When the Chairman of the Dawson Conglomerate, Monroe Dawson, saw what was going on, he immediately ordered, "Halt!"

In unison, all of the riders immediately pulled sharply on their horses' reins. The horses rose high in the air on their hooves, then came down and halted.

"Release the young master," Monroe Dawson instructed. The red-haired warrior of the ninth rank in charge of Yale's protection and escort waved his hands, and the ropes covering Yale instantly split apart. Yale immediately jumped down from the horse. As for George and Reynolds, they had jumped down long ago already.

"Third Bro, are you okay?" Reynolds was so excited that his eyes were red.

"Third Bro, this is wonderful! I knew you would be fine!" Yale said excitedly.

George didn't say anything at all, just thumping Linley on the chest.

"Third Bro, let's go. Leave Fenlai City with us," Yale immediately said, and Monroe Dawson also spoke out now. "This would be Linley, right? Come along with us. As long as we aren't attacked by a Saint-level combatant, our safety should not be a problem at all."

Monroe Dawson desired very much to have Linley be a member of the Dawson Conglomerate.

What the Dawson Conglomerate lacked the most was Saint-level combatants!

"No need. I have some affairs to settle. Boss Yale, Second Bro, Fourth Bro, you leave first." Linley shook his head.

"Third Bro, are you actually going to...?" Yale shouted in shock. Yale already guessed at what Linley was planning.

Linley nodded. "Right."

Clayde. He had to die!

Last time, he failed because of the Saint-level Fateguard, but Linley believed that, given it was already extremely rare for a ruler of a kingdom to possess a single Fateguard, there was no way that Clayde could be in possession of a second one. Right now, the Saint-level combatants of the Radiant Temple were all focused on saving their own skins. It was highly unlikely that they would care about protecting a king at this point.

“Boss Yale, you can leave now. I’ll go find you all later,” Linley said.

“There’s too many magical beasts here this time. I’m afraid that the Ernst Institute is going to be attacked as well, given its proximity to Fenlai City. We won’t be heading back to the Institute. After reaching a safe location, both Reynolds and George plan to go back to their own empires. As for me...I’ll follow my father for now,” Yale replied. George and Reynolds both nodded.

“Good. Then in the future, I’ll go looking for you all. Boss Yale. Second Bro. Fourth Bro. Farewell.” Linley stared longingly at his three good bros, nodded heavily a single time, then turned and leapt in the opposite direction at high speed, travelling over a hundred meters in three steps.

Yale, Reynolds, and George all understood that seeing this Third Bro of theirs again in the future would be quite difficult.

The three of them immediately mounted their horses. “Go!”

The Dawson Conglomerate’s convoy headed out once more.

This day, countless clans within the City of Fenlai were on the brink of annihilation, and the Debs clan was no exception. The clan leader, Bernard, had been crushed to death by the Violet-Eyed Goldfur Ape’s foot, along with the successor, Kalan. The other clan members didn’t have any time to consider who the next clan leader should be, because immediately afterwards, they suffered an even greater loss. Magical beasts began attacking the Debs clan’s manor.

Guards, servants, maids, clan members... they all died, one after the other. The people of the Debs clan all went wild, grabbing what valuables they could get their hands on and fleeing in all directions. By now, nobody would think about helping others.

“Big sister Alice, what should we do?” Rowling was stunned.

Alice was stunned at first as well, but now she recovered. “Come with me,” Alice immediately shouted. Alice was a magus of the fourth rank, after all, while Rowling was a warrior of the fourth rank. Considering their ages, this was actually quite impressive. But in a situation where magical beasts of the fifth rank were everywhere, they didn’t have the ability to resist at all.

Leading Rowling, Alice rushed into Kalan’s room and grabbed two magicrystal cards from a drawer.

“Little sister Rowling, each of these two magicrystal cards have a hundred thousand gold coins in them. They’ll be enough for us to survive on. We can go now.” Alice handed Rowling one of the magicrystal cards, then they rushed out of the manor together. One of them was a magus, the other was a warrior.

They were in fairly good physical condition, and were able to run quite agilely.

“Save me! Ah!”

A maid frantically ran past Alice and Rowling, while behind her a Windwolf was in hot pursuit. The Windwolf viciously charged directly to her, then snapped directly at her throat. Staring at Alice and Rowling, the maid’s eyes were filled with the desire to keep living. But then, her eyes grew dim and faded.

Rowling stood there, staring stupidly at the spectacle.

“Hurry, let’s go!”

Alice pulled at Rowling’s hands. To try and be benevolent right now was to court certain death. Right now, even combatants of the ninth rank didn’t dare to be too self-sacrificing, much less them. In the City of Fenlai, there was currently more than ten Saint-level combatants, and nearly a hundred magical beasts of the ninth rank.

The lower ranked magical beasts were even more plentiful, especially the fifth-and sixth-ranked magical beasts such as the horde of Windwolves, which numbered in the hundreds of thousands alone. There were only a million or so denizens in Fenlai City to begin with, and most of them only possessed strength at the first or second rank. They had no chance of fighting back.

“Rip!” Alice and Rowling, these two weak girls, ripped off the dress part of their wedding gowns, so as to allow themselves to run faster.

“Big sister Alice, there are magical beasts up ahead,” Rowling suddenly called out.

“This way.” Alice pulled Rowling by the hand, rushing towards a small alleyway.

But after crossing through the alleyway, they saw that the other side also had magical beasts. Alice and Rowling were forced to stay in the middle of the alley, between two manors. But suddenly, from the other side of the alley, a Vampiric Iron Bull charged towards them.

“Let’s go!” Alice pulled strongly at Rowling’s hands, and they rushed out of the alleyway. They ignored the magical beasts up ahead. There were many people up ahead as well, after all. Those magical beasts might not necessarily target the two of them. They continued to charge forward as frantically as they could.

Their breaths were hoarse and ragged. This life and death juncture had increased their anxiety to the highest level.

“Howl!” “Howl!” Suddenly, from behind them, over ten Windwolves suddenly charged forward at high speed. Windwolves were simply too fast, possessing more than double the speed of Alice and Rowling. Very soon, the ten Windwolves would catch up to them... and at the same time, up in front of Alice and Rowling, an enormous Landwyrn appeared.

The Landwyrn was large enough that just by standing there, it blocked off almost half of Greenleaf Road. And with that draconic tail... there was nowhere for Alice and Rowling to flee.

“Big sister Alice...” Rowling felt somewhat hopeless.

Alice looked at that enormous, two-story-tall Landwyrn, then at the ravaging pack of Windwolves charging in their direction. She couldn’t think of any way to escape at all.

“Am I going to die?” Alice couldn’t help but tightly embrace Rowling. At this moment, she too felt that all hope was lost. From behind, the ten Windwolves



were about to arrive, their white fangs gleaming with a cold light...

A beautiful flash of violet light.

The heads of the ten Windwolves instantly flew apart. A human figure descended from the heavens, then charged directly towards that enormous Landwyrn.

“That is...” Alice and Rowling stared stupidly at the person who had suddenly saved them.

Alice could clearly see who it was.

“A long, long time ago, something like this happened as well.” A lost look in her eyes, Alice stared at that figure. It was Linley. In truth, Linley’s own residence was located right across the street from the Debs clan’s manor, and right now, Alice and Rowling were only a few dozen meters away from Linley’s manor.

Linley wouldn’t just watch someone die without helping, after all.

“Haaaargh!”

Twisting his waist, Linley applied power to his legs, kicking out forcefully like the snapping of a whip. Like an iron whip, Linley’s leg snapped out, piercing through the air with a shriek as it landed against the skull of the Landwyrn.

And as this was happening, Linley’s legs suddenly became covered with black scales.

Demidragon form!

“Bam!”

This kick was simply too fast. Caught off guard, the Landwyrn was unable to react, and its skull exploded from the force of Linley’s blow. The enormous body of the Landwyrn collapsed, slumping to the ground.

Linley landed on the ground. Rowling and Alice, watching all of this, were somewhat stunned.

“Big... big brother Linley...” Alice said softly.

Linley turned to look at them, a frown appearing on his face. Linley didn’t

have the spare time to lead these two girls around, but if Alice and Rowling were to be here by themselves, they would definitely die. But then, Linley suddenly saw a squad of knights charge over at high speed. Within this squad of knights was an old man riding a handsome stallion. It was Managing Director Maia of the Proulx Gallery.

Under this assault by the magical beasts, the collections within the Proulx Gallery were essentially finished. Director Maia was only able to collect the most important pieces within his interspatial ring of holding.

These ‘interspatial rings’ were extremely valuable and rare. Even Director Maia only had one because his clan had passed one down.

“Director Maia,” Linley shouted loudly.

Seeing Linley, Director Maia was extremely excited. “Master Linley, you are here!” The people Director Maia admired the most were those master-level sculptors, so naturally, Director Maia greatly admired Linley, this young man who was able to so easily carve out a sculpture that was almost on the same level as Proulx and Hope Jensen.

There were actually very few people who knew about Linley’s attempted assassination of King Clayde. In the outside world, the story was that a demon had attempted to kill King Clayde. Naturally, Director Maia didn’t know the truth.

“Master Linley, come along with us.” Director Maia was very confident.

The martial force of the Proulx Gallery was quite high. As long as they weren’t attacked by a Saint-level magical beast, they definitely wouldn’t find surviving to be a problem.

“Director Maia, no need. But I hope you can help me. These two girls have some ties to me, and I hope you can take them to a safe location,” Linley instructed.

“No problem. But Master Linley, Fenlai City is not safe right now,” Director Maia hurriedly said.

“No need. I have affairs to settle. I entrust these two girls to you.” After he spoke, Linley immediately disappeared into his manor. Alice and Rowling

exchanged glances, and then were immediately ordered by Director Maia to mount a horse and integrate into the convoy.

“He... actually didn’t say a single word to me.” Alice suddenly felt a little heartsick.

The sound of hoof steps unabated. Director Maia’s convoy, along with Alice and Rowling, departed.

Only now did Linley emerge from his manor, bearing a black parcel on his shoulders. This parcel contained several magicrystal cards, some of the remaining Bloodrupture poison powder, and Blueheart Grass.

“Bebe, now we head to the palace.”

“Boss, let’s go have ourselves a slaughter.” Bebe was excited as well.

Linley immediately led Bebe and moved at high speed towards the palace.

Quite a few people had already fled, but Clayde had gone into the royal treasury instead. How could Clayde abandon the riches of the royal clan which had been accumulated for countless years? The wealth of a royal clan was an incredibly large figure.

The Debs clan, at its prime, was worth perhaps a hundred million gold coins.

But a corrupt major official such as Duke Patterson had also managed to accumulate around a hundred million gold coins. As for the wealth stored within the palace treasury, that was worth far more.

Within the treasury.

“This is the wealth that has been accumulated by countless generations of rulers of Fenlai over thousands of years.” Staring at the treasures within the treasury, Clayde didn’t have too much time to ponder. He grabbed the most valuable items and directly absorbed them into his interspatial ring. As a king, Clayde had been lucky enough to procure an interspatial ring as well.

“And these 32 magicrystal cards.” Clayde looked at the magicrystal cards in his hands.

These 32 magicrystal cards were all un-bound, and they represented thousands of years of wealth that had been accumulated by the kingdom. Each

card contained within it a hundred million gold coins. The 32 magicrystal cards, in total, represented a wealth of 3.2 billion gold coins. This was a terrifying sum. Perhaps even some of the major clans of the Four Great Empires didn't have such a large sum of gold.

A popular saying was that the easiest way to make money was to become a king. The wealth that had been accumulated by kings over thousands of years was naturally astonishingly high.

"The capital, Fenlai City, is finished." Clayde turned to give the remaining treasures one last look, then ground his teeth and left.

But what Clayde didn't realize yet was that it wasn't just the capital which was finished. The entire Kingdom of Fenlai had now become the territory of magical beasts! He, Clayde, was no longer a king! What's more, it wasn't just the Kingdom of Fenlai that had been destroyed; a huge amount of the territory belonging to the Holy Union was being rapidly devoured and claimed by magical beasts.

## One Hand

In a secluded courtyard within the palace, the most important members of the royal clan of Fenlai were gathered, including Clayde, his wives, and his many children.

“The entire City of Fenlai is swarming with magical beasts. We definitely cannot all travel together in a large group, as that would attract some extremely powerful magical beasts,” Clayde said solemnly. This reasoning was something everyone understood, and was the reason why Director Maia and Monroe Dawson were travelling in small convoys.

Convoys of a few dozen people were everywhere in Fenlai City, and weren’t remarkable at all.

But a convoy of several hundred people would draw the attention of magical beasts of the ninth rank, and perhaps even result in an attack from a Saint-level magical beast.

The most dangerous thing one could do right now was to attract attention from magical beasts.

“Carre, you and your mother shall lead a division of the Wildthunder squad soldiers. Here are five un-imprinted magiccrystal cards. Remember, this represents thousands of years of wealth accumulated by our clan!” Clayde looked solemnly at his son.

There were too many people in the royal clan. They had to go in separate packs.

Clayde didn’t want for his clan to be annihilated. By going in separate packs, the chances of at least some surviving would be greater.

“Yes, father.” Carre was overjoyed.

Thousands of years of accumulated wealth... how much would that be worth?

“Shaq, you, your mother, and your younger sister will also lead a division of the Wildthunder squad soldiers. Here are five magiccrystal cards for you as well.” Clayde withdrew another five magiccrystal cards and handed them to his second son. Both of the princes were extremely excited.

Clayde’s face was very solemn. He said, “The elite soldiers of our clan will be divided into these three divisions. Carre’s, Shaq’s, and my own. No matter who manages to survive in the end, at least our clan will continue. Enough, let’s head out!”

“Kaiser, as the instructor for the Wildthunder Regiment, you will come with me.” Clayde looked at Kaiser.

“Yes, your Majesty.” Kaiser nodded.

The Wildthunder Regiment was the most powerful defensive regiment within the Kingdom of Fenlai. The entire regiment, including Kaiser, only consisted of a hundred people, giving each squad only 33 soldiers. But although they were small in number, they were high in quality. Even the weakest member of this regiment was a warrior of the seventh rank.

Divided into three squads, the royal clan immediately began to flee in three separate directions.



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“Swish!” Linley leapt up at a high speed. At the same time, there was a violet flash of light, and the Thunderwing Pegasus that was harassing Linley suddenly split into two halves. Linley continued to run forward, making his way towards the palace at high speed.

On the way, he passed by far too many human and magical beast corpses.

“Arrived at the palace.” Linley was leaping forward so fast that his body was naught but a blur, and with each movement, he travelled dozens of meters. This sort of astonishing speed made it impossible for magical beasts of the fifth and sixth ranks to stop him.

“Whew.”

Linley easily leapt up over ten meters in the air, flipping into the interior of the palace.

“Roaaaar!” The sound of magical beasts roaring could be heard from within, as well as the battle cries of soldiers. Right now, there were no longer any guards at the palace gates. The only things present were corpses, blood, and rent flesh. And, occasionally, a massive corpse of a magical beast.

Like an agile treecat, Linley leapt his way through the tops of the various palace buildings.

But when Linley arrived on top of one particular roof, he suddenly saw a mounted squad far away. Right now, virtually no one was using carriages anymore. Carriages were simply too slow for fleeing.

“That is...”

Linley instantly was able to recognize that golden-haired man in the center of the squad. It was the ‘Golden Lion’, Clayde. Clayde was currently issuing orders to his soldiers to kill the magical beasts besieging them. This squad’s teamwork was really quite marvelous.

When a group of elite warriors of the seventh and eighth ranks worked together as one, they were actually more powerful than a group of the same size consisting only of warriors of the eighth rank that had no teamwork.

“Clayde.” Linley’s eyes lit up.

“Boss, let’s make our move.” Bebe was excited as well.

“Wait. We can’t afford any mistakes this time. Wait for his squad to get closer to us, and then we will launch a sudden ambush.” Linley remained on top of the roof, his cold eyes focused on that distant mounted squad.



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“Don’t waste any time. Quick.” Clayde swung the giant warsword in his hands, chopping down a Dragonhawk from midair.”

During this past half month, Clayde had managed to purge a small amount of

Bloodrupture poison from his system, allowing him to recover 10% of his battle-qi. Although it was just 10%, he once more had the power of a warrior of the eighth rank.

But Clayde recognized that he would most likely need another half year to purge the remaining 90% of Bloodrupture poison from his body.

“Where the hell did all these magical beasts come from? Bastard.” Clayde was growing more and more furious.

These magical beasts had destroyed his capital, and now they were threatening his life. How could he not be angry?

“Quick.”

After killing all of the attacking magical beasts, Clayde immediately pressed his men to hurry on, and the troop of knights once more sped forward. As Clayde and his men travelled at high speeds through the pathways between the palace buildings, they didn’t notice at all that someone was lying in wait on the roofs above.

Watching Clayde and his men draw nearer and nearer, Linley narrowed his eyes.

All the fur on Bebe’s body was standing straight up.

“Now is the time!”

Linley’s voice rang out in Bebe’s head, and the two of them, man and magical beast, flew at high speeds towards Clayde. In that split second before launching, Linley’s entire body was suddenly covered with a layer of black scales, and spikes sprouted from his forehead, his elbows, and his knees. From behind, that draconic tail sprouted out as well.

Dragonform!

That squad of knights lived up to their reputation of being elites. As soon as Linley and Bebe flew towards them, they immediately noticed and tried to react. But Linley and Bebe were simply too fast!

“Ah! It’s you!” Immediately seeing that terrifying creature, Clayde knew without a doubt that Linley had come!



He didn't have time to wonder why Linley wasn't dead yet, because Linley's draconic tail had already arrived, viciously slapping at him from just two meters away. Behind him, Kaiser had already become caught up dealing with that black Shadowmouse and wasn't going to be able to save him.

"Whap!"

Linley's draconic tail slapped down mercilessly, and Clayde quickly dodged by tumbling to the ground. Linley's tail thus landed on the horse, and the animal was split into two halves by the sheer force of that vicious blow. The warhorse let out a pain-filled whinny before collapsing.

Fallen on the ground, Clayde pressed down on the ground with his fists and quickly retreated.

But now, Linley came chasing after him.

"Swish swish!" At the same time, eight spears gleaming with battle-qi were thrust at Linley.

"Haaargh!"

The Dragonblood battle-qi in Linley's body burst forth, and he used his right leg to viciously kick at the ground. He instantly reached an extremely high momentum as he shot forward like a boulder that had been catapulted forth in anger. Linley's body smashed fiercely against those eight spears.

The eight spears shuddered at almost the exact same time, and those eight streams of power essentially managed to cancel out with the power of Linley's charge.

"This will be troublesome." Linley frowned.

He didn't expect those eight knights would be able to block his attack so effortlessly.

But what Linley didn't know was that those eight knights were shocked and terrified as well. These eight knights were Clayde's personal bodyguards, the most elite of the elite Wildthunder Regiment. All of them were warriors of the eighth rank. Working together, the eight of them would even be able to hold off a warrior of the ninth rank.

However, not even a warrior of the ninth rank would dare to forcibly ram into their spears. But Linley had.

“What a freakishly strong defense.” Hiding far away and protected by the remaining knights, Clayde’s heart trembled.

“Shkreeeee!”

Bebe let out a piercing screech, then swept his fierce claws at Kaiser again and again, while sometimes using his fangs to bite at him as well. But Kaiser rather effortlessly managed to use his greatsword to block each of Bebe’s attacks. Kaiser’s sword techniques seemed very simple but were highly effective.

One step back, then a piercing stab with the sword that seemed incredibly hard to block.

“Clayde, who is going to rescue you today?” Linley looked at the mighty warriors in front of him and sneered. “Fine, you want to engage in group attacks?” As soon as Linley finished speaking, he immediately charged at one particular knight.

Linley didn’t fear or pay attention to the attacks of the other knights, simply aiming himself at that one knight.

Now, their combined attacks were useless.

“Whoosh!” Linley was simply too fast. In the blink of an eye, he arrived by the side of that warrior of the eighth rank. Balling his fierce claws into a fist, he slammed it towards that warrior. The warrior leaned back to avoid it, but at this time, Linley’s draconic tail suddenly swung forward and crushed the warrior’s skull in.

“Thrall!” Many of the knights howled in fury.

The Wildthunder Regiment had always trained together, and their affection for each other was no less than that of blood brothers. Many warriors furiously aimed their attacks at Linley, and despite their anger, they were still able to coordinate their attacks very well, as greatswords and long spears attacked in perfect sequence.

“Pew!” The Bloodviolet Godsword suddenly appeared in Linley’s hands.

Ignoring the attacks aimed at him, Linley flew to another knight while thrusting Bloodviolet directly towards his eyes. The sword went straight through his skull. The man died immediately.

“Die!” Instantly, another one of the knights pierced at Linley’s head with his own spear.

Linley flipped Bloodviolet around and struck a counterblow. Just as the knight was about to attempt to block it, Bloodviolet suddenly curved in midair and effortlessly cut the knight’s head off. Even without being activated by battle-qi, the Bloodviolet Godsword in Linley’s hands could easily kill a warrior of the seventh rank. And now, suffused by Linley’s Dragonblood battle-qi, the Bloodviolet Godsword was more than capable of killing a warrior of the eighth rank as well.

Bizarre attacks!

Three of the warriors of the eighth rank had died in the blink of an eye.

“I want to see how you’ll block me!” Linley once again charged towards Clayde, the devilish Bloodviolet Godsword flashing nonstop in the air. None of the knights dared to get close with Linley, because that Godsword in Linley’s hands was simply too bizarre.

“Groooooowl!”

Suddenly, from far away, a roar could be heard.

“Rumble, rumble, rumble.” Ponderous, heavy footsteps shook the earth. The deep sounds and vibrations made it more than clear that this was an enormous magical beast headed their way, and it was drawing closer.

But Linley didn’t care about anything at this point.

“Block him, block him!” Clayde shouted loudly, while continuing to retreat.

Linley suddenly leapt into the air, launched himself off a wall, and flew towards Clayde at high speed. Seeing this though, Kaiser instantly kicked off and launched himself backwards as well, transforming into a blur and sweeping the greatsword in his hands directly towards Linley.

“Come.” Linley didn’t attempt to block the sword at all, aiming the

Bloodviolet Godsword in his hands directly at Clayde.

“Last time, you had a Saint-level Fateguard to protect you and Heidens to save you. I want to see who will rescue you this time.” Linley’s dark gold eyes spat death at Clayde, and the Bloodviolet Godsword in his hands struck out towards Clayde’s throat like a vicious snake. Right now, Clayde had almost gone crazy as he began to wave the greatsword in his hands in an attempt to block.

“Haaah!” Very suddenly, Kaiser released his grip on his greatsword, letting it fly.

“Bam!” Linley didn’t manage to react in time, and his right arm was struck heavily by the greatsword. Right at that moment, the burning battle-qi contained within the greatsword burst forth. Linley felt his arm suddenly grow numb. Due to this smashing blow, the Bloodviolet Godsword in his hands was now more than a meter away from his target, Clayde.

“Hmph.”

The Bloodviolet Godsword suddenly curved in midair, wrapping itself around the greatsword in Clayde’s hands, and then slid down until it was wrapped around Clayde’s wrist. Chop!

“Whap!”

Clayde’s right hand was cut off, and it fell to the ground with a thud. The fingers on the hand were still extended, and the sword fell to the ground as well. In addition, that severed hand had a ring on it. That ring was the most precious item of all to the royal clan of Fenlai – the interspatial ring.

“My hand! Get it back, get it back!” Clayde’s face had turned white from the pain, but he still shouted furiously.

This interspatial ring contained twenty-two magicrystal cards with a total value of 2.2 billion gold coins! In addition, it had several dozen precious treasures that the royal clan had accumulated over thousands of years. Clayde would rather die than allow this interspatial ring to be lost. This was the accumulated wealth of countless generations of his clan!

“Swish!”

A black blur suddenly flashed by and made off with the severed hand, then leapt onto Linley's shoulders.

"Boss, the more Clayde wants something, the more we will work to prevent him from getting it," standing on Linley's shoulders, Bebe mentally spoke to Linley. "But Boss, why would he want this severed hand so much? There's nothing special about this hand. Could it be that it is this ring that he wants?"

## Interspatial Ring

“Get it back, quick!” Clayde was so frantic that his face and neck were both beet red with rage. He roared, “The ring, get it back, get it back! A million gold coins to whoever gets it back!”

When the members of the Wildthunder Regiment heard the words ‘a million gold coins’, a hint of greed appeared in their eyes. All of the mighty knights began launching group attacks against Linley, and the leader of the Wildthunder Regiment, Kaiser, was the first to charge at him.

“Ring, eh? Looks like it really is valuable.” Seeing how crazed Clayde had just become, Linley couldn’t help but laugh coldly. With a powerful leap, he shot backwards at high speed, retreating. While retreating, Linley quickly pulled the ring off the severed hand, and then put it on his own finger.

“Linley, this is an interspatial ring!” Doebling Cowart said excitedly. Given his powerful soul, Doebling Cowart could instantly sense what was so special about this ring. An interspatial ring was a priceless treasure! Linley was shocked as well.

He had thought that this ring was something akin to an ancestral heirloom of the royal clan of Fenlai. He didn’t expect it to be one of the fabled interspatial rings of legend. Interspatial rings were extremely rare. Even in the Radiant Church, only two of its five Cardinals were in possession of interspatial rings.

No one was stupid enough to sell an interspatial ring.

And once these interspatial rings were imprinted and bound by the blood of its master, there was no way anyone else could use them. This was the best place to store treasures. Of course, there was one way to open an interspatial ring; kill the owner. Once the owner died, the interspatial ring would revert to being an un-bound item. At that point, one could imprint and bind it to one’s self and gain access to the treasures within.

“Whoosh.”

Greatsword in hand, Kaiser stared fixedly at Linley as he suddenly pierced through the air. Carrying an explosive force that seemed capable of shattering mountains, the greatsword shattered the air and howled terrifyingly as it swung towards Linley. Linley could clearly, visibly see the red light flowing on the surface of the sword.

This power couldn't be blocked head on!

“Swish!” With another leap, Linley sent himself dodging in another direction again.

“Bam!” The wall Linley had been standing on was struck by the terrifying force of that sword, and an entire section of wall exploded outwards with the sword at its epicenter. The walls within a hundred meters of that blow all crumbled and collapsed.

“So powerful!” Linley was secretly amazed.

Far away, under the protection of his remaining guards, Clayde couldn't be bothered about the pain from his severed hand. He shouted loudly, “Quick, get the ring back for me, quick!” Clayde was about to go mad. Although he knew that Linley wouldn't be able to open the interspatial ring despite having it, if the ring remained in Linley's hands, then he, Clayde, wouldn't be able to access the items within it despite being its master.

2.2 billion gold coins! What an amazing, enormous sum of money that was.

Thousands of years of accumulated royal wealth. For these treasures and wealth to be taken away was more painful to him than being killed.

“Bam!”

A section of wall collapsed. An enormous magical beast was walking in the middle of the palace grounds, passing through walls as though it were walking on flat ground. One wall after another collapsed as though they were made from mud. This enormous magical beast had already noticed Clayde and Linley, and it roared in excitement. “Groooooooooowl!”

“Violet Tattooed Bear!” Seeing that familiar figure, Linley wasn't too

frightened. Perhaps it was because he could still remember the terrifying power of the Saint-level Violet Tattooed Bear in the Foggy Valley. In terms of size, this Violet Tattooed Bear was about the same size as the Saint-level Violet Tattooed Bear in the Foggy Valley, but Linley felt this bear's aura was not as formidable.

This Violet Tattooed Bear was the one which had killed Duke Bonalt and his family. By now, he had begun to attack the palace.

Having seen Linley and Clayde's group, it was now gleefully charging through the palace towards them, roaring happily.

"Thud!" "Thud!" "Thud!" "Thud!"

The Violet Tattooed Bear was a machine bred for war, with a body the size of a three-story building and massive, sturdy bear paws. Even the sturdiest of walls would be shattered by a single blow of those paws. And right now, the bear's target was Linley and Clayde's group.

"Clayde, you want the ring? If you have the ability, come and get it," Linley shouted loudly while moving around at high speed.

"Bebe. You deal with those other warriors. This Kaiser, I'll handle," Linley said mentally.

"Fine. Boss, just watch me!" Bebe excitedly scurried towards that group of warriors.

Those combination attacks practiced by the warriors were all meant to be used against human-shaped opponents by attacking their vitals. They were of no use at all against a magical beast like Bebe which was physically small, extremely fast, and astonishingly durable.

Bebe stretched out his vicious claws and gave a nasty swipe. "Snick!" He slashed directly through half the neck of a warrior of the eighth rank, causing blood to spurt out wildly. That warriors' head directly swung down, only remaining connected to his body by a thin layer of skin.

"Hmph." Kaiser's eyes turned red, and with an angry shout, he chopped at Linley with his greatsword.

With a leap, Linley dodged, while at the same time his legs spun like a



tornado. Carrying the power of a pair of sharp knives, Linley's legs chopped towards Kaiser's neck.

Kaiser leaned his head backwards while launching a counterattack, and Linley's kicks just barely brushed against Kaiser's face. Just a little closer, and he would've been able to kill Kaiser. While Kaiser was leaning his head back, he too launched a powerful kick at Linley, but Linley, who was in mid-air, didn't dodge at all.

"Swish!"

Linley's long, iron-whip-like tail suddenly pierced through the air, thrashing viciously towards Kaiser.

One attack after another!

If Kaiser was to continue his attack against Linley, then clearly this attack of Linley's would hit him as well. "Hrmph." Kaiser kicked the ground hard, sending himself flying backwards as he retreated at high speeds while at the same time, slamming the greatsword in his hands against Linley's tail. Kaiser's speed was so fast that he had retreated roughly a hundred meters in the blink of an eye.

"Whoosh!"

Kaiser once more charged forward at high speed. The greatsword in his hands was actually vibrating now, transforming into six illusionary swords, causing Linley not to know how to block.

"Ah!" Bebe killed another warrior, this one of the seventh rank, by crushing the warrior's skull with his fangs. This was Bebe's seventh kill.

These deaths only further enraged Kaiser, who had trained and taught these Wildthunder Regiment soldiers. But Linley was simply too hard to deal with. Not only could Linley attack with his hands and his feet, the attack power of his tail was also extremely terrifying. And Linley's durability was astonishingly high as well.

Fortunately...

In terms of both combat experience and tactical acumen, Linley couldn't compare to a true warrior of the ninth rank who had trained for over a hundred

years.

“Quick, quick, get the ring back!” Clayde was at the verge of losing his sanity.

Right now, the situation was totally not in his favor. If this continued, they wouldn’t have any chance of recovering the ring at all. Within that interspatial ring was thousands of years of accumulated wealth by the royal clan. Even if he died, he couldn’t allow that ring to be lost.

“Roaaaaar!”

The Violet Tattooed Bear had finally arrived, and all the warriors nearby scattered in its wake. No one dared to fight with it head on. To engage in battle against a powerful magical beast of the ninth rank required one to be a warrior of the ninth rank at the very least. And given that magical beasts were naturally more powerful than humans, most likely even a warrior of the ninth rank would only be able to guarantee that he wouldn’t die.

That Violet Tattooed Bear actually came to a halt and glanced at the group of people present. The intelligence of a high-rank magical beast wasn’t inferior to that of humans at all, and a magical beast of the ninth rank might actually be even more intelligent than some humans. This Violet Tattooed Bear could easily tell that these people in front of him were divided into two groups. On one side, there was a man and a magical beast, and on the other were the knights who were led by the man with only one hand.

And that man with one hand seemed to be quite concerned about a ring.

The Violet Tattooed Bear could understand the human tongue. Although he couldn’t speak in it, he could understand it. A hint of excitement appeared in the eyes of the Violet Tattooed Bear.

“Wooo, wooo!”

The Violet Tattooed Bear clapped its massive paws together excitedly, then charged directly towards Linley and Kaiser. Upon encountering any warriors in its path, it simply waved its massive paws, mercilessly batting them aside.

“Ah!” A warrior of the eighth rank frantically tried to dodge, while at the same time a jade-green light appeared from his body.

But although the Violet Tattooed Bear didn't move that quickly, its paws were able to attack at a terrifying speed. "WHAP!" The massive paw slammed against the warrior of the eighth rank. A sickening, crunching sound could be heard as the man's head was instantly shattered. The warrior's battle-qi aura was shattered as well, and his body was reduced to nothing more than ground meat.

Even the ground beneath the man had a giant hole gouged into it, with deep cracks appearing in the area around the hole.

"Why is a magical beast of the ninth rank so much more powerful than humans of the same rank?" Seeing this from afar, Linley's heart couldn't help but feel surprise. Kaiser, still engaged in battle against Linley, grew frantic as well. He didn't have any confidence at all in his ability to deal with a Violet Tattooed Bear.

Violet Tattooed Bears possessed extremely thick, durable skin and tremendous power. Even giant dragons would probably be reduced to a pulp by its massive paws. Its only flaw was that in terms of movement speed, it was rather slow. Its attack speed, however, was still astonishingly high. Violet Tattooed Bears could be considered one of the extremely powerful kinds of magical beasts of the ninth rank.

"Bam!" "Bam!" "Bam!"

Linley and Kaiser exchanged blows at high speed, and Linley's arms, legs, and tail clashed nonstop with Kaiser's greatsword. The speed of their blows was at an astonishingly high level. Linley, relying on his astonishing defense, dared to fight with seemingly suicidal attacks, but Kaiser's techniques were effective, and he possessed both experience and powerful battle-qi.

The battle between them had no clear victor.

"Roaaaaar!" The Violet Tattooed Bear had reached Linley and Kaiser, and it swiped down with its massive paws towards the two men.

"Swish!" Linley and Kaiser both retreated backwards at high speed.

"Bam!" The sound of the bear's paw slamming into the ground produced a deep vibration, causing the entire ground to shake. The ground within ten

meters of the blow became covered with cracks. Neither Linley nor Kaiser chose to attempt to forcibly block that blow!

A Violet Tattooed Bear's paw was perhaps the most powerful, durable part of its body.

If they attempted to block it head on, the two of them would've both become nothing more than meat paste.

"Roaaaar!" With a loud howl, the Violet Tattooed Bear actually turned and charged at Linley.

"Why the hell are you chasing me?!" Relying on his high speed, Linley began to flee. After having Dragonformed, Linley possessed the speed of a warrior of the ninth rank, and a very fast one at that. At the same time, the Violet Tattooed Bear's weakness was its movement speed. It wasn't too hard for Linley to shake it off.

The Violet Tattooed Bear continued to charge forward, and anyone who got in its way was slapped to death.

It only pursued Linley!

Linley didn't know that the Violet Tattooed Bear had taken a fancy to that ring. Given its intelligence, and its understanding of human languages, the Violet Tattooed Bear knew that the ring was something that both parties valued.

It was actually quite common for magical beasts of the ninth rank to understand human tongues. They understood it, they just couldn't speak it, simply because their bodies weren't designed to speak it. But upon reaching the Saint level, they could break free of this restriction and speak in human tongues.

"Ring! My ring!" Clayde was about to cry.

"Your Majesty." Kaiser was standing guard in front of Clayde. "Your Majesty, it's best we leave now. If we don't leave, things will become extremely dangerous."

Of the 33 members of the Wildthunder Regiment, fourteen had just been

killed by Bebe. The remaining members were beginning to panic as well. The magical beast in front of them was physically small, possessed astonishing durability, and had terrifying attack power. It was highly suited for dealing with humans.

“Roaaaar!”

“Roaaaar!”

Suddenly, a mighty series of draconic roars could be heard from the skies, as hundreds of gigantic dragons with jade-green scales, blazing red scales, silvery scales, and even a very tyrannical-looking Black Dragon began to fly in their direction.

Dragons possessed a very high level of intelligence. They knew that the palace held many treasures, and dragons loved collecting treasures.

“Roaaaaaar!” The leader of this flight, the massive Black Dragon, focused on Clayde and Linley. With a mighty roar, it led the large pack of dragons to charge downwards towards the palace. Those Fire Dragons and Emerald Dragons were only dragons of the eighth rank, but Silver Dragons and Black Dragons were generally dragons of the ninth rank.

Seeing this, Clayde, Kaiser, and the others were all stunned.

A single magical beast of the ninth rank was already hard enough to deal with. And now a horde of beasts was coming?

“Boss, this isn’t good. Let’s run.” Bebe’s voice rang out in Linley’s head as well, but right now, Linley was still being pursued by that Violet Tattooed Bear who had taken a fancy to that interspatial ring.

## A Terrible Situation

“Thud!” With each step of its massive feet on the ground, the Violet Tattooed Bear would make the earth shake. This Violet Tattooed Bear was fixated on Linley. No matter where Linley ran off to, the Violet Tattooed Bear followed, while its two massive bear paws continually tried to reach out at him.

“Groooooowl!”

Hearing those familiar dragon roars, Linley couldn’t help but look up at the skies. What he saw made his heart clench tightly.

The sky was covered with countless massive dragon bodies. In terms of numbers, there were definitely more here today than that time Foggy Valley. What’s more, within the host of dragons, there were even Silver Dragons and Black Dragons. Both of those were dragon-type beasts of the ninth rank!

“No!”

With a sudden leap, Linley avoided yet another attack from the Violet Tattooed Bear, then charged directly for Clayde. “No matter what, this time, I have to kill Clayde.”

“Get it, ring, get it back!” Clayde’s forehead was covered with sweat, but he didn’t dare charge forward himself.

“Roaaaar!”

“Roaaaar!”

Several dozen dragons swooped down from the skies, blasting forth dragonfire from their mouths. The flames belched forth by the Black Dragons were black in color as well, while the Silver Dragons exhaled plumes of silvery-white flames. Clearly, in terms of temperature, the black and silver flames were far hotter than the dragonfire of the Fire Dragons.

“Sizzle sizzle.”

The temperature of the surrounding area immediately began to rise at a terrifying speed as several dozen streams of dragonfire blasted down.

“Your Majesty, if we don’t leave, we’ll die for sure! If we’re dead, treasures will be useless to us!” Kaiser’s entire body was suffused with red battle-qi. He roared frantically at Clayde, who started.

“CLAYDE!!!”

A furious roar from the fully Dragonformed Linley, who was shooting towards him like an arrow.

“Go. Go, let’s go!” Clayde immediately howled out the order angrily. This decision of Clayde was an extremely painful one for him, but he too understood that if he died here, everything would be lost. In addition, his eldest prince and his second prince both had magiccrystal cards on them, with a combined value of a billion gold coins.

A billion gold coins was definitely enough to allow a royal clan to rebuild and flourish again.

“Bam!” Kaiser’s giant sword once again blocked Linley’s attack.

“Kaiser, let me kill Clayde. No matter how much gold you desire, I’ll give it to you.” Linley was half-mad with anxiousness as well.

Kaiser just shook his head.

“Roaaaar!”

Right at this moment, a Black Dragon suddenly swooped down and tried to snatch Linley with its claws. Black Dragons were highly intelligent. Seeing how the Violet Tattooed Bear continuously pursued and tried to kill Linley, it was sure that there had to be a reason for the bear’s fixation. Thus, its first target was Linley.

“Me again?” Linley frantically dodged to the side.

Just now, when he had been fighting with Kaiser, that Violet Tattooed Bear had decided to chase after him instead of Kaiser. Now, the same thing was happening again. The Black Dragon of the ninth rank chased after the fleeing Linley.

“Whew.” Kaiser paid no more attention to Linley as he hurriedly upped his speed to the maximum and fled away. Immediately, several of the giant dragons began a pursuit of Clayde and Kaiser, but the large majority of them continued to encircle and attack Linley.

The Violet Tattooed Bear began to roar in anger as it rose to its hind feet.

Clearly, it was enraged at the dragons for stealing its prey, but the Violet Tattooed Bear didn’t dare to openly fight against the dragons either. The Violet Tattooed Bear wasn’t confident in beating even that extremely large Black Dragon leader of this host of dragons, to say nothing of the rest of the dragons.

“Thud!” “Thud!” “Thud!”

The Violet Tattooed Bear began to walk away in a different direction, moving a long distance with each stride. Every building in its way was crushed and demolished.

“Clayde!” Seeing Clayde and his men grow farther and farther away, Linley wanted to immediately chase after them.

But yet another massive dragon descended from the skies. This was a massive Black Dragon, over a hundred meters long, and it blocked the road in front of Linley while constantly reaching for Linley with its claws. From its mouth, it repeatedly blasted hot flames at Linley.

Both the earth and the skies were covered in dragons, and all of them were launching attacks at Linley. Surrounded and attacked by so many dragons, Linley felt miserable as well.

“Bastards!”

Encircled and besieged by a large number of dragons, Linley could only watch as Clayde disappeared from his field of vision.

“Boss, we need to flee!” Bebe was frantic now.

Bebe was extremely agile, and also very small. It would be very difficult for those dragons to attack him. What’s more, Bebe’s fierce claws and sharp fangs were very powerful as well. His attack power was now enough to cause some harm to the dragons, causing all of them to be quite nervous with respect to



that little tiny thing.

“Go. Go where?”

No matter in which direction Linley tried to flee, a host of dragons would block and attack. He wasn't afraid of dragons of the eighth rank, but there were more than ten dragons of the ninth rank as well.

“Whap!”

Linley was attacked viciously by a Silver Dragon's tail, but Linley only flipped around in the air before trying to flee again. But it was useless. In midair, several dragons encircled and attacked again. Linley was in such a bad situation that he wanted to cry.

“Swish!” Linley very agilely avoided an attack by a fierce claw, continuing to dodge about at high speed.

“Boss, I'll help you!” Seeing the danger Linley was in, Bebe immediately flew over as well and began chomping down viciously at the leg of that dragon. CRUNCH! CRUNCH! CRUNCH!

“Roaaaaar!” That giant dragon let out a roar of pain.

Relying on his astonishing speed, Linley managed to resolve one draconic attack after another. Whenever he met with real danger, Bebe would help out. The dragons weren't able to do anything to Linley for now either.

In their eyes, this human-shaped aberration was too hard to deal with, and that even smaller-sized rat-type magical beast kept on nibbling at them and causing them pain.

“Roaaaaar!” The leading Black Dragon let out another roar.

Instantly, all of the dragons flew into the air. They had already made the decision to give up this battle against this difficult-to-deal-with human-shaped aberration. It was totally not worth it for an entire host of dragons to waste so much time on a single human-shaped aberration.

The host of dragons flew away, just like that.

“They left?” Linley was startled.

Just moments ago, he had been frantically dealing with the attacks of many dragons, and he had been dodging for his life. That was a very miserable experience. He didn't expect the dragons to give up just like that.

"Boss, let's go now!" Bebe urged.

"Right. Clayde."

Recalling Clayde, Linley maintained his Dragonform and led Bebe in a high speed charge through the city.

By now, the vicious battles between man and magical beast within Fenlai City had all but come to an end. There were very few living people within Fenlai City now, and virtually the only creatures alive on the streets were magical beasts that were hunting for living humans. The Dragonformed Linley moved too fast, and what's more, the fact that his body was covered in scales deceived many magical beasts into thinking that Linley was a magical beast as well.

"Not here."

Linley had led a chase in the direction where he thought Clayde would've fled to, but even after escaping Fenlai City, he still didn't find any traces of Clayde's party.

Outside Fenlai City. A desolate scene.

Even many of the great trees that had lined the road to and from Fenlai City had been shattered. Countless human corpses lay on the road as well. Clearly, these people had managed to flee Fenlai City, but had been killed outside the city by magical beasts nonetheless.

In the desolate countryside outside Fenlai City, small groups of one or two magical beasts could be seen everywhere.

"I wonder what direction that Clayde ran off in." Linley stared at the three branching forks ahead of him. He felt very helpless. It was possible that Clayde might've even left through the East Gate of Fenlai City, but as Linley saw it, that was unlikely because the further east they went, the closer they would have come to the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts.

Thus, Linley had chosen to exit via the West Gate.

But despite having left by the West Gate, Linley still didn't know in what direction he should now head. After all, there were hoof prints pointing every which way.

"Perhaps that Clayde didn't choose any of the roads, and went cross-country into the wilderness," Linley said to himself. The weakest person in Clayde's party was of the seventh rank, and so going cross-country wouldn't be difficult at all.

Linley understood that the chance of finding Clayde in the wilderness was very, very low!

"North. I heard that 'King' of the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts say that the people of the Holy Union could only flee to the north! I'll head north as well. Given Clayde's fame, there's no way that his passing will attract no attention. When I reach the north, I'll search for him again." Linley made up his mind.

Seeing the corpses littering the area around him, Linley couldn't help but sigh.

"Ah! The town of Wushan!"

Linley suddenly thought of his own hometown. The town of Wushan was less than a hundred kilometers away from Fenlai City. What sort of shape was the town of Wushan currently in? Linley couldn't be bothered to cancel his Dragonform transformation, as he began to run at the highest speed available to him towards the town of Wushan.

Although Linley wasn't moving at maximum speed, after having assumed the Dragonform, he was able to easily travel two or three hundred kilometers each hour as a warrior of the ninth rank.

The trees on each side of the road quickly disappeared into the distance, and dust flew about everywhere.

"Is that...?" A fleeing mounted knight suddenly saw a human-shaped aberration suddenly charge in his direction from behind. He couldn't help but be frightened, but Linley only passed him by, moving like the wind towards the town of Wushan. This was the speed of a warrior of the ninth rank! Within twenty minutes, Linley had drawn close enough that he could see his

hometown.

The town of Wushan.

This was a very quiet little town. In the past, the lives of the commoners here had been very peaceful.

But now...

Corpses. Mutilated corpses everywhere. Those corpses clearly bore the signs of having been ravaged by magical beasts.

“This... this...” Linley walked onto the main road of the town of Wushan. He stared at the corpses littering the main road and the side alleys. There were old people, young people, women, children... seeing all this, Linley couldn’t help but feel grief in his heart.

Linley recognized the majority of the dead people.

Linley suddenly saw a young man not far away, clutching a baby in his arms. That young man’s body was covered with blood, and that baby had been bitten to death as well.

“Or... Orson.” Linley wanted to cry, but the tears wouldn’t come out.

Orson was only one year older than him. When Linley had first started his physical training at the empty training grounds outside the town of Wushan, both of them had been placed within the six-to eight-year-old group. Orson was the little boy who had stood right next to Linley when they had lined up. The two of them were on fairly good terms. Linley knew that two years ago, Orson had gotten married after reaching the age of maturity. That dead infant was most likely Orson’s child.

“Rip. Rip.” Not too far away, several Windwolves were chewing on the corpses of the dead.

“Ah!” Linley cast a furious glare at them, then flew towards them like a bolt of lightning. He didn’t use his Bloodviolet Godsword. Using his two hands, he either smashed their heads in or ripped them into several pieces barehanded.

In the blink of an eye, the few dozen magical beasts that had remained in the town of Wushan were all killed.

Seeing the magical beast corpses around him, as well as the human corpses, Linley cancelled his Dragonform transformation, a pained laugh escaping him. And then, he fell to his knees, powerless.

Everyone was dead.

“Haha...” Linley began to laugh in a low voice, but his eyes had begun to fill with tears.

“When the magical beasts ambushed the city and I escaped from the Radiant Temple, I was so immeasurably smug and self-satisfied with myself. But...” Linley’s tears began to flow. Only now did Linley truly understand the meaning behind the words that ‘King’ of the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts had spoken.

“How could I be a pathetic human? Humans are nothing more than food to us magical beasts!”

“Food. Food.”

Linley’s heart was filled with grief.

The town of Wushan. His hometown. These familiar fellow villagers!

All dead.

When he had left his hometown, Linley had felt fairly calm, because he had always known that his hometown would still be there. But now... his hometown was gone. Everyone was dead.

“What a calamity,” Doehring Cowart’s ancient voice rang out. “Not just for your hometown. Most likely nearly half of the entire Holy Union has now become the domain of magical beasts. Those people... will become nothing more than food.”

Linley quietly stared at his surroundings. He could totally envision how the countless people within the domain of the Holy Union had now been trapped within a catastrophic nightmare. This so-called day of joy, the 10000th anniversary of the Yulan Festival, to the people of the Holy Union and the Dark Alliance, had become a day of catastrophe.

## The Titanic Black Python

When a catastrophe occurred, the only thing a person could do was accept it.

After leaving the town of Wushan, Linley and Bebe headed north. Everything Linley saw only made him all the more taciturn. The entire Kingdom of Fenlai had turned into a playground for magical beasts, and human corpses were nothing more than food for them.

On the long road north, magical beasts occasionally dotted the landscape. Not a single living human being could be seen.

But suddenly, a human form appeared at the end of the road. The human form was moving forward quickly, and was being pursued by several howling magical beasts. But with a few flashes of violet light, those magical beasts were diced apart, and the human form continued northwards. On this person's shoulders, there was an adorable little black Shadowmouse.

"Boss, shouldn't we find a place to rest? I'm getting a bit hungry," standing on Linley's shoulders, Bebe mentally spoke to Linley.

Linley cast a helpless look at Bebe.

This entire trip, he was the one who had been actively moving, while Bebe was either just standing on his shoulders, enjoying the wind, or sleeping inside Linley's clothes. How exactly was he tired?

"Fine. There's a mountain up ahead. We can kill a few magical beasts and cook them for food." Linley still pampered and spoiled Bebe as always. To Linley, aside from his three bros and his younger brother Wharton, who was in the O'Brien Empire along with Uncle Hillman and Housekeeper Hiri, he had no close kin. But meeting with Wharton or his three bros was and would be an extremely rare thing.

Only Bebe would always be by his side.

In Linley's heart, he viewed Bebe as a younger brother to be pampered and spoiled.

"This Bloodviolet Godsword is still quite handy when dealing with magical beasts of the seventh or eighth ranks. But it is quite hard for it to penetrate the defense of a magical beast of the ninth rank and deliver a sufficiently deadly wound." Linley glanced at the sword at his waist and sighed.

The Bloodviolet Godsword was very sharp, very fast, and could bend in any which way he desired it to. It was thus extremely useful when dealing with large numbers of weaker enemies. But when used to deal with a single powerful magical beast, this Bloodviolet Godsword of Linley's was actually not even as good as Linley's own claws and draconic tail.

At the base of the stubby mountain, Linley and Bebe were roasting a pair of wolf legs. They had not yet left the boundaries of the Kingdom of Fenlai, and so the area was swarming with magical beasts. But given Linley and Bebe's current power, as long as they didn't encounter any Saint-level magical beasts, they would be safe.

"It's cooked." Bebe immediately grabbed a haunch of wolf leg and began to chomp through it.

With a wave of his hand, Linley extinguished the fire, then grabbed a roasted wolf leg and began eating as well. This roasted wolf leg, when cooked alongside some wild herbs and grasses, was actually quite tasty. In the mountain wilderness areas, one could often find some ingredients that could be used for cooking. This was a survival skill one learned in the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, and Linley naturally knew it.

That wolf leg was much larger than Bebe, but Bebe finished eating it before Linley had. By the time Linley was halfway through, Bebe had finished his portion.

"Slither slither."

Suddenly, a very minute sound could be heard from far away. Linley froze in mid-bite, while Bebe's little ears perked up as well. In unison, the man and the

magical beast turned to stare behind them.

It was a python.

An enormous python, easily the size of a house. Those two bizarre, reptilian eyes looked like giant red lanterns. Only ten or so meters of its enormous body could be seen outside of a grove, but just judging from the fact that its body was three meters thick, Linley could easily imagine how terrifyingly large this creature really was.

The visible ten or so meters was just a small part of it.

Seeing the dense black skin, tattooed with yellow lines, the expression on Linley's face changed.

"It's a Titanic Black Python." Linley was instantly sure of this magical beast's breed.

Titanic Black Pythons were considered one of the more powerful types of pythons. Generally speaking, adult Titanic Black Pythons were magical beasts of the ninth rank, roughly on par with the Nine Headed Serpents. Amongst python-type beasts, the Titanic Black Python was famed as a war machine.

If you were to place a Titanic Black Python in the middle of an army, it could definitely kill a hundred thousand soldiers.

It was a darkness magical beast with incredible defensive powers. Its fangs were poisonous. These were the special traits of the Titanic Black Python.

"Hisssss. Hisssss." The forked tongue of the Titanic Black Python flicked in and out, and its cold eyes stared at Linley and Bebe. Clearly, this Titanic Black Python had already decided that Linley and Bebe were to be its next meals.

"Bebe. Be careful."

Linley's gaze was locked on the Titanic Black Python, not daring to relax in the slightest. At the same time, dense black scales began to erupt from Linley's skin, and a row of spikes rose up out of his back. His forehead, elbows, and knees all sprouted sharp, fierce spikes as well.

"Whap. Whap." Linley's draconic tail slapped the ground a few times. By Linley's side, all of the hair on Bebe's body was standing up straight.



Seeing this, the Titanic Black Python suddenly rose up high in the air. Clearly, it was now on guard and vigilant.

“Whoosh!”

Like a gust of wind, the entire body of the Titanic Black Python shot forward. In less than a second, its enormous, hundred-meter-long body was striking against Linley and Bebe, who both also almost simultaneously launched attacks against the Titanic Black Python.

“Swish!” Bloodviolet flashed.

“Clang!” Linley heard a sound similar to a hammer striking against an anvil. His Bloodviolet Godsword had only been able to leave behind a white mark on the Titanic Black Python’s skin, and hadn’t managed to wound it at all.

“It really is very durable.”

The enormous body of the Titanic Black Python began to wrap around Linley. Linley knew that if he allowed it to constrict him, not only would he be unable to breathe, the terrifyingly powerful constrictive force would probably be able to crush him to death.

“Haaaa!”

Linley’s sharp claws suddenly pierced towards the Titanic Black Python’s body. With a ‘rip’ sound, his claws penetrated the Titanic Black Python’s outer layer of scales. However, Linley could feel that his claws could go no further. Beneath the scales, Linley could sense an astonishingly durable force.

“Whoosh!” The Python was about to constrict Linley!

Linley only laughed coldly. He suddenly ripped his claws free and leaped outside of the Titanic Black Python’s coils, while at the same time smashing his elbows down at the Titanic Black Python. Linley’s elbows had those sharp spikes on them, which were the unique traits of Armored Razorback Wyrms and possessed astonishing power.

“Riiip!” The spike pierced through the black scales and slowly penetrated downwards.

“What exactly is underneath the scales of this Titanic Black Python? Its

defense is so formidable.” Linley’s sharp spike was only able to penetrate halfway through before being stopped.

“Aaaargh!”

The Titanic Black Python let out an angry, pain-filled roar, and in a flash, its massive head struck towards Linley, its bloody maw opened wide. Suddenly, a black liquid shot out from its mouth and was spat towards Linley.

“Venom.” Linley immediately leapt off against the body of the Titanic Black Python, hurriedly dodging backwards.

But the amount of black venom was too great, and the area it covered too large. Some of it still managed to land on Linley’s legs.

“Sizzle, sizzle.” A strange sound could be heard coming from Linley’s legs.

Linley could feel that the black venom which landed on his legs had been totally blocked by that layer of defensive scales. The defensive powers of an Armored Razorback Wurm were quite formidable, and the venom didn’t pose much of a danger to the scales.

“Boss, let’s run. That Titanic Black Python is freakishly tough. Its scales and flesh are too thick,” Bebe urged.

“Run.”

Without hesitating in the slightest, Linley and Bebe went running northwards. Slithering forward rapidly, the Titanic Black Python gave chase for a while, but in the end, Linley and Bebe managed to leave it in the dust.

After escaping the Titanic Black Python’s pursuit, Linley and Bebe finally left the boundaries of the former Kingdom of Fenlai. However, despite having left its boundaries, they still saw the same desolate sights. It seemed as though the ‘King’ of the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts had told the truth.

They intended to take over half of the territory which had belonged to the Holy Union.

“Swish!”

Bloodviolet flashed, easily cutting a Dragonhawk in two.

“Bebe, tell me, why is it so hard for us to deal with magical beasts of the ninth rank?” By now, Linley had already encountered several magical beasts of the ninth rank, such as the Black Dragon and Violet Tattooed Bear in Fenlai City. When faced with these creatures, Linley was forced to dodge. There was no way for him to take them head on.

Even when dealing with the fairly slow Violet Tattooed Bear and Titanic Black Python, Linley wasn’t able to truly harm them.

Bebe was speechless as well.

Bebe and Linley both had the same problem. Bebe’s problem was that he was physically small, and probably wouldn’t even be able to chew past the opponent’s thick skin with his teeth. How would he harm the enemy?

“Linley,” Doehring Cowart’s voice rang out.

Linley suddenly came to his senses.

Right. Why not ask Grandpa Doehring? Grandpa Doehring had vast experience, and certainly should’ve seen many Saint-level combatants. He must have some sort of understanding in this regard.

“Linley, are you frustrated by the question of dealing with magical beasts of the ninth rank?” Doehring Cowart laughed.

Linley nodded. “Yes, Grandpa Doehring. Do you know what I should do?”

Doehring Cowart continued, “Linley, actually, your Bloodviolet Godsword is quite powerful. But the problem is, pre-Dragonform, you are only a warrior of the seventh rank. Post-Dragonform, you are still only an early-stage ninth rank warrior. As an early-stage ninth rank warrior, you think you can kill a magical beast of the ninth rank?”

Linley was startled.

Right. The problem was that he wasn’t strong enough.

“When you enter the eighth rank, you will be a peak-stage warrior of the ninth rank in Dragonform. By then, you will be able to harm magical beasts of the ninth rank using your claws or using Bloodviolet.” Doehring Cowart chuckled. “However, it’s still possible for you at your current level of power to

deal with magical beasts of the ninth rank as well.”

“How?” Linley exulted. Grandpa Doehring really did know a way!

Doehring Cowart said, “Linley, did you notice that both Kaiser and Clayde used greatswords?”

Linley thought back to his battles. Right, Kaiser and Clayde did indeed both use greatswords.

“Do you know why they use greatswords?” Doehring Cowart asked.

Linley was beginning to grow curious. Right. As warriors of the ninth rank, Clayde and Kaiser naturally knew that using lighter weapons would be faster. Why did they choose to use greatswords instead? Linley couldn’t help but to think back to those battles he had with Kaiser.

“Linley, when I was young, I remember that whenever my father was cutting down trees he would always use heavy axes rather than small hatchets. Why is that?” Doehring Cowart guided patiently.

Linley started to have an inkling of understanding.

“Light weapons are sharp. When dealing with large groups of enemies, they are very effective. But when fighting in solo combat against a powerful foe, they are inferior to heavy weapons. Through the usage of a heavy weapon, a person can utilize more of his power and increase the force of his blows. And... to a warrior of the ninth rank, even a weapon weighing a few hundred pounds won’t slow him down too much.”

Linley was now beginning to truly comprehend.

Only through using heavy weapons could one truly unleash all of the power they were capable of.

For example, would a strongman deliver more powerful blows using a massive mace, or a light sword? A Dragonblood Warrior was capable of lifting boulders weighing tens of thousands of pounds. Their potential strength was extremely astonishing.

“No wonder why when I faced the Titanic Black Python, I felt as though using the Bloodviolet Godsword wasn’t as effective as using my own fists and claws,”

Linley said. "Perhaps I too should find a heavy weapon to use."

While chatting, Linley continued to make his way northwards into the desolate wilderness.

"Boss, there's a squad of knights up ahead," Bebe suddenly said to him mentally.

Linley looked carefully. Indeed, up ahead, there was a squad of knights taking a break up ahead. Linley had already encountered quite a few such squads. Generally speaking, squads capable of surviving in these magical-beast-infested lands were composed of elite soldiers belonging to major clans.

"No need to pay them any mind." Linley ignored these people, continuing forward.

But when he drew near, Linley suddenly noticed a familiar face.

"Shaq? Second Prince Shaq?" Linley was startled.

As the Prime Court Magus for the Kingdom of Fenlai, Linley knew both Crown Prince Carre and Second Prince Shaq.

## The Rescue

Travelling on this desolate road, Shaq, the Second Prince of Fenlai, was bitterly cursing at these magical beasts. Off in the distance, Linley quietly removed the interspatial ring from his fingers and placed it within one of his pockets.

“The royal clan of Fenlai divided into several squads when they left. No doubt, they had made prior arrangements for where they would meet up.”

Linley was worrying about where he would find Clayde, but now that heaven had delivered Shaq and his squad to him, how could Linley not be overjoyed? In addition, Linley could guess... that when he had tried to assassinate Clayde, then been captured by the Radiant Church, the latter had originally still planned to make use of him and thus had most likely ordered Clayde to keep silent.

“Perhaps this Shaq doesn’t yet know that the ‘demon’ who tried to kill his father was me.”

As he was thinking these thoughts, Linley began to walk in Shaq’s direction.

Linley had another thought as well. “If Shaq knows that I tried to kill his father, then none of them will be spared!” Shaq’s men were powerful in comparison to most magical beasts, but compared to these two freaks Linley and Bebe, they weren’t much at all.

“Second Prince! Your Highness!”

Linley called out in a loud, friendly voice.

Shaq, who had been eating roasted meat while cursing, started upon hearing Linley’s shout. He swiveled his head over to look at Linley. As he did so, Linley and Bebe both watched him carefully, paying attention to his every facial expression and to his gaze.

“If anything seems off at all, first we capture, then we kill!” Linley carefully

watched Shaq's eyes and face.

Upon seeing Linley, Shaq excitedly jumped to his feet. He charged over, his burly body two meters tall, and immediately pulled Linley into a massive hug. In an overjoyed voice, he said, "Lord Linley, you actually made it out safely! This is wonderful, wonderful!"

"I am very happy to be able to see you here as well, Second Prince!" Linley didn't detect any falseness in Shaq's eyes or expressions. He nodded to himself.

Linley's guess was spot on. Clayde had been instructed by the Radiant Church to remain silent, and that he could not, no matter what, reveal that the 'demon' who had attempted to assassinate him was Linley. No matter how daring Clayde was, he wouldn't dare disobey the direct orders of the Radiant Church.

"Lord Linley, have you eaten yet? Come, come eat with us," Shaq said warmly.

Right now, Shaq had no idea that he was walking on a fine line between life and death. If just now, there had been anything wrong with his facial expressions, he would've died.

"Lord Linley, please don't blame my royal father for not rescuing you. Those hordes of monsters came too quickly. My royal father had no choice. He didn't even bring most of his royal consorts, only just the most important ones," Shaq explained on behalf of his father.

"I can understand." Linley nodded while walking towards their camp.

All of those elite knights reminded Linley of the Wildthunder Regiment knights he had fought back when he attacked Clayde at the royal palace. The knights in front of him had a very similar aura and bearing to those knights back then. Aside from those thirty or so knights, there was a slightly older lady, and a little girl who was only five or six years old.

"My respects to you, Royal Consort. My respects to you, Princess."

Linley immediately bowed towards those two women.

The very beautiful, refined-looking consort was over forty years old, but she looked as though she was barely thirty. She was an alluring, attractive woman. The consort immediately laughed. "Linley, when his Majesty left, he was in a

terrible rush. He didn't bring a single magus with him. And, he felt confident that the Radiant Church would rescue you, thus..."

Both Shaq and the consort immediately made explanations for Clayde.

Both Shaq and the consort felt that it was very important to have good relations with Linley. They didn't know the real relationship between Linley and Clayde.

"I understand," But in his heart, Linley was laughing coldly. Earlier, when he was battling with Clayde's men in the palace, Linley had already noticed that the guards consisted solely of knights, and that no magi were present. Similarly, there were no magi present here in Shaq's squad either.

Clearly, when fleeing, Clayde hadn't had time to look after his magi at all.

Although magi were very useful when it came to doing battle, this time they were engaging in flight, not in battle with magical beasts. Bringing a magus along would actually slow things down. How could a magus travel as quickly as a powerful warrior? Some of the more powerful warriors could run like the wind even if they had no horse. But magi?



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On this desolate road, Shaq and his squad continued to hurry forward nonstop. Some of the formerly prosperous villages on the way had already been reduced to ash, and rotting corpses were strewn everywhere. In this wasteland, magical beasts could often be seen roaming about singly or in pairs.

Those lucky humans who had manage to escape the first massacre would eventually all be chased down and eaten by these roaming magical beasts.

"Our Kingdom of Fenlai is finished."

Shaq, riding side by side with Linley on their horses, spoke with a sigh as he looked off into the distance. Occasionally, a magical beast would launch attacks against them, but the Wildthunder knights would easily dispose of them. Shaq and Linley's conversations weren't disrupted at all.



“Most likely nine out of ten citizens of the Kingdom of Fenlai are dead now.” Linley’s face was full of sorrow and despair as well.

Shaq nodded slightly.

In his heart, Shaq was also in mourning. The destruction of the Kingdom of Fenlai meant that his clan was no longer a royal clan. When there was no kingdom, how could there be a royal clan?

“Fortunately...” Shaq’s thoughts turned to the five magicrystal cards in his bag. With these five magicrystal cards, even though the royal clan of Fenlai no longer had a kingdom, it wouldn’t be too hard for them to become a powerful clan again, thanks to their thousands of years of accumulated wealth. Linley suddenly said, “Second Prince, where will we be meeting with his Majesty?”

The purpose of Linley travelling with Shaq was to learn of Clayde’s whereabouts.

Shaq said with resignation, “Lord Linley, my royal father and I originally didn’t expect the scope of this disaster to be so wide. Thus, the two meeting points we had originally designated were within the Kingdom of Fenlai’s borders and are now useless. Right now, the only thing I can do is follow our original plan and keep heading north. When we reach one of the cities that was designated by me and my royal father, we will stop, if the city is safe.”

Linley instantly understood.

Clayde and Shaq had designated more than one city as possible rendezvous points. They most likely designated a string of cities heading north of the City of Fenlai. Whichever city was safe would be the city they would stop at.

“Which cities did you and his Majesty designate as meeting points?” Linley asked with a laugh.

Shaq wasn’t suspicious at all. He immediately said, “There were quite a few cities. Some were within the Kingdom of Fenlai, while others were in the kingdoms and dukedoms to the north. We even designated a city within the O’Brien Empire.”

“The O’Brien Empire?” Linley began to laugh.

Shaq said, somewhat embarrassed, “My royal father was worried that these magical beasts might take over the territory of the entire Holy Union. If that was the case, we would be forced to flee to the O’Brien Empire. The O’Brien Empire is the empire with the strongest military force in the Yulan continent, and definitely would be able to stop those magical beasts.”

Linley knew much more than Shaq did.

The O’Brien Empire didn’t just possess a powerful military. It also had War God O’Brien.

As long as the War God was present, even that ‘King’ of the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts would have to seriously consider whether or not attacking the O’Brien Empire was a good idea.

“No need to over-think it. We’ll just continue to make our way forward. When we reach a safe spot, we’ll find the nearest city that my father and I designated, then we’ll rest. Lord Linley, let’s speed up. Giddy up, giddy up!” As he spoke, Shaq sped up as well. Their hoof steps speeding up, the squad of knights quickly made their way through the wilderness.

Travelling with Shaq and his squad, Linley no longer had to personally act when they were attacked by magical beasts. Those Wildthunder troops disposed of all the attackers.

Three days later.

“Two kingdoms and three duchies have collapsed.”

Shaq and Linley had passed the Kingdom of Fenlai, the Kingdom of Hanmu, as well as two duchies. They had just entered the Dukedom of Ligaode, but here, too, no humans could be seen.

Such a huge swath of territory had fallen. This really was an astonishing event.

After all, the Holy Union only had six kingdoms and fifteen duchies to begin with.

“Growl.”

“Growl.”

A series of growls from magical beasts could be heard from far away, mixed

with the shouts of men. Hearing those mixed sounds, Linley and Shaq immediately knew what was going on.

“There’s a battle between humans and magical beasts going on up ahead.” Shaq frowned. Rubbing his chin, he said, “Everyone, be careful. Let’s go around them.”

“Yes,” the members of the Wildthunder squad said respectfully.

Leading his men, Shaq carefully circled around the area in front. But when they got close to the combat area, Shaq suddenly stared at the battlefield. “Prince Louis?”

Linley also turned to pay attention to that battlefield. Another elite squad of knights was there, but unfortunately, this squad had terrible luck. They had run into a pack of Fire Lions.

Fire Lions were fire-element magical beasts of the seventh rank. They could easily blast fireballs from their mouths, and their bodies were wreathed in flame.

Although they were ‘only’ magical beasts of the seventh rank, magical beasts naturally were more powerful than most humans of the same rank. Even a warrior of the eighth rank would usually have to expend some effort to kill a fire-element magical beast of the seventh rank. But clearly, within that elite squad of knights, there were very few warriors of the eighth rank. The majority were of the seventh rank.

Over half of this squad of knights had died as a result of this battle against nearly twenty Fire Lions. Only a third of the Fire Lions had perished.

But although half of the knights had perished, none of the warriors of the eighth rank had. Thus, in reality, the squad of knights had only lost a third of its total combat potential.

“Stop,” Shaq ordered.

The group of knights were startled, but they all nodded. The power of the Wildthunder squad, when added to Prince Louis’ forces, should be enough to

kill those Fire Lions without too much trouble. But what surprised them was that Shaq didn't permit them to do battle right away.

Another half of Prince Louis' men had died or been injured, including two warriors of the eighth rank. Half of the Fire Lions had died as well. Only now did Shaq give the order.

"Let's go. Rescue Prince Louis," Shaq suddenly ordered his men.

"Yes!"

Instantly, the Wildthunder squad began to charge. With the added strength of these thirty-plus warriors, ten of them of the eighth rank, five of the Fire Lions were instantly killed. The rest, seeing the writing on the wall, quickly turned tail and fled.

"Prince Shaq, thank you, thank you!"

Prince Louis was an extremely handsome young man, but right now, he looked to be in a very sorry state. Upon seeing Shaq, Louis was so grateful that he ran over to hug him.

"Prince Louis, alas, I saw your squad of knights attacked from quite far away, but due to self-preservation considerations, I hesitated for a while. Only after I saw it was you did I order my men to come attack. I hope you won't blame me," Shaq said very 'honestly'. He regretfully added, "If I had come a bit earlier, you would've lost fewer men."

Earlier, Shaq and his knights had waited far away for quite a while. How could experts like Louis and his men not be aware?

In his heart, Louis had borne a grudge towards Shaq, but now, hearing him say this, Louis somewhat believed him.

It made sense.

After such a disaster had occurred, who would go rescue someone who had no relation to one's self?

"Prince Shaq, no need to say such things. I am already extremely grateful. If it weren't for you, most likely only two or three of us would be remaining. Hey, no need. We can take care of our own people's corpses," Seeing one of Shaq's men

actually go and remove the bags from the corpses of their own volition, Louis shouted out at them.

As soon as the Fire Lions had fled, those few lucky survivors of Prince Louis' force immediately went to remove the bags from the corpses of the deceased, then put them on.

This naturally raised Shaq's suspicions.

Why bring the bags of the deceased? Thus, he ordered that man to go remove some of the bags. Indeed, it had agitated Prince Louis. "Alright, here you go." Shaq's knight immediately handed the bag over. When Louis' knight received the bag, he glared angrily at Shaq's knight.

Seeing this, Shaq only laughed coldly in his heart.

This was too easy to guess.

Very few royal clans were in possession of an interspatial ring. The royal clan of Fenlai had only managed to acquire one through great luck. Now that disaster had struck, naturally these royal clans would want to take the treasures in their treasuries with them. Without interspatial rings, the only option was to carry them in bags. For Prince Louis to be so agitated about these bags most likely meant that he was having his subordinates carry important treasures of the Kingdom of Hanmu.

"Not too many men left. 100% chance of success." Shaq looked at Louis' men. He had already made his decision.

## A Major Treasure

“Prince Shaq, thank you once again for your assistance. Let us part ways here,” Prince Louis said with a smile.

Shaq’s face immediately turned stern. Unhappily, he said, “Prince Louis, what’s the rush? Right now, this area is covered with magical beasts, and you only have seven people left. If you meet any more magical beasts on the road, it’ll be very dangerous. Come along with us. With our combined strength, we will be safer as well.”

Prince Louis hurriedly said, “Prince Shaq, no...”

“Don’t refuse. Otherwise, I’ll get angry,” Shaq said with a stern, angry look.

Prince Louis looked very awkward, but in his heart, he was furious. He, Prince Louis, wasn’t an idiot. He knew that his subordinates’ earlier actions of collecting off the bags of the deceased had aroused suspicion.

It was true.

The bags of his subordinates contained the major treasures of the royal clan of the Kingdom of Hanmu. The royal clan of Hanmu had been in existence for over a thousand years. Although its history wasn’t as long as that of the royal clan of Fenlai, it still possessed an astonishing amount of wealth and major treasures. However, their royal clan didn’t have any interspatial rings, and so they had to carry their treasures with them.

Actually, in such a chaotic period, the various noble clans of Fenlai and Hanmu had all thrown their valuables and magicrystal cards in bags and fled. The number of people in the entire continent who had interspatial rings was very low. Even a powerful entity such as the Proulx Gallery had only one, belonging to Managing Director Maia.

“This Shaq is full of bad intentions.” Louis was extremely worried.

He wanted to refuse, but he was afraid that Shaq really would have a falling out with him.

A knight by the side of Prince Louis nudged him, then stepped forward. This knight was the instructor for Prince Louis. "Since Prince Shaq is so sincere, then we shall travel alongside your squad. Only, we're sorry to have troubled you, Prince Shaq."

"No trouble at all. Haha, let's go together." Shaq laughed loudly.

Just judging from appearances alone, this two-meter-tall, burly man looked like a foolish boor. But having grown up in the royal clan, how could Shaq truly be foolish? He, too, could guess what the other party was thinking. Nonetheless, he led everyone travelling north.

"Boss, the atmosphere seems really weird," Bebe said mentally to Linley.

Linley laughed inwardly. That Prince Louis didn't dare to offend Prince Shaq too much, but he had to be careful so as to prevent Prince Shaq from acting against him. Naturally, this expedition became rather... special. Watching both sides, Linley knew exactly what was going on.

After chatting for a while with Prince Louis, Prince Shaq separated, then rode over to Linley. In a low voice, he said, "Lord Linley, did you see?"

"See? See what?" Linley looked at Shaq.

After making sure that no one belonging to Prince Louis was nearby, Prince Shaq said in a low voice, "The royal clan of Hanmu is in flight. They surely took with them many of the major treasures they accumulated over their thousand years of existence. In my estimation, those knights' bags are all filled with major treasures." Linley knew that the existence of the Golden Bank of the Four Empires had made magicrystal cards quite popular.

Even large clans and royal clans used magicrystal cards. To these clans who possessed hundreds of millions of gold coins in wealth, most treasures weren't a big deal. For example, when they were fleeing, these nobles couldn't be bothered to bring something like Blueheart Grass, which was worth one hundred thousand gold coins.

The only things they would take were the most important treasures, all worth

over a million gold coins, such as magicite cores of magical beasts of the ninth rank or of the Saint level, or perhaps treasures from other planes. Or divine artifacts...

“Lord Linley, as long as you are willing to assist, when we divide the treasures, naturally you will have a share as well. No. Two shares. What do you say? In my view, those treasures must be worth several million gold coins at least,” Shaq said in a low voice.

Shaq knew very well what an astonishing amount of wealth a royal clan possessed. Because in his own hands, there were five hundred million gold coins in magicrystal cards.

The Kingdom of Hanmu wasn't inferior to the Kingdom of Fenlai. They probably possessed the same amount of wealth. How could the major treasures they carried out be of low quality?

“Fine.” Linley nodded. “When you plan to make your move, notify me as to what you wish.”

Hearing this, Shaq was extremely excited.

Perhaps when they were fleeing, magi were hindrances, but when they were able to engage in a battle, their power was astonishing. Linley was a dual-element magus of the seventh rank. With their opponents totally caught off-guard, he alone could probably kill half of them.

Linley carefully inspected those seven people on Prince Louis' side. Right now, each of them were carrying four or five bags. In particular...

“Hrm?”

Linley suddenly noticed that the sound of hoof steps of one middle-aged man's horse was particularly loud. In addition, that horse seemed more tired than the other horses as well. More importantly, that middle-aged man had another horse running alongside him! He had two horses to himself!

Clearly, this middle-aged man needed to frequently change horses.

“These horses are both fine horses. Even if they were carrying three or four people, they would gallop like the wind. Why would this middle-aged man



cause these horses to be so tired, to the point where he would have to frequently change horses?” Linley instantly understood the reason.

This middle-aged man was very heavy.

Or, to put it another way, the things he was carrying were very heavy. “But this middle-aged man is only carrying a short sword. Can it be that within his bags...” Linley’s only explanation was that the four bags the middle-aged man was carrying included something extremely heavy.

The wind howled.

Both Prince Louis’ and Prince Shaq’s men had retired for the night. No matter how strong one was, they would still need rest. Prince Louis and his six warriors all rested together, while Prince Shaq’s men were divided into four or five units. These two forces were located in separate areas.

“Master, when should we leave?” Prince Louis said in a soft voice. The other five men were all feigning sleep.

“Wait a bit longer. When they’ve all fallen asleep, we’ll mount and leave,” that middle-aged man said quietly.

Fleeing into the dark night was a very common strategy. It was a common strategy because many people used it... and many people used it because it was effective!

The thirty people on Prince Shaq’s side were feigning sleep as well. Not a single one of them was truly asleep. Everyone knew that there would be a battle they had to fight tonight.

“Lord Linley.” Prince Shaq was by Linley’s side. He called out to Linley in a soft voice.

“Hrm?” Linley turned to look at Shaq.

Prince Shaq continued, “Lord Linley, prepare to secretly cast a magic spell. This will catch them off-guard and make them suffer heavy losses. And then, my squad will charge over and finish them off. Lord Linley, it’s up to you now.”

“Fine.” Linley nodded.

A sudden sneak attack via magic at night was something which opponents

definitely would not be able to foresee.

Linley's lips began to move slightly as he quietly began to chant the words to a magical spell. By his side, Prince Shaq could only wait impatiently. Poor Prince Louis and his men actually wanted to wait a while longer and flee after Prince Shaq and his men had fallen asleep.

“Swish! Swish! Swish!”

In a circular area with a radius of ten meters, dozens of sharp earthen spears suddenly jutted out of the ground. “Ah!” A series of agonized screams sounded out as those sharp earthen spears suddenly pierced through those warriors' bodies, and one of them was directly impaled through and through. That poor Prince Louis was instantly killed as well by those spears. He was, after all, the weakest person amongst them.

The thickly clustered array of earthen spears was enough to freeze one's heart.

Earth magic of the seventh rank – Earthen Spear Array.

Four of the seven people in Prince Louis' party died in agony on the spot, while the three remaining warriors of the eighth rank suffered serious injuries as well, due to being caught off-guard.

“Kill!”

The thirty members of the Wildthunder squad were previously feigning sleep, but hearing those miserable screams, they all charged towards the other camp as though they had received orders. They immediately attacked those three wounded warriors of the eighth rank, in a thirty against three fight.

This wasn't a fair contest at all. What's more, the Wildthunder squad had ten warriors of the eighth rank.

“Slice.” “Slice.”

Those three wounded warriors of the eighth rank were easily killed. They were barely able to resist at all.

“Second Prince, all of them are dead now.” The captain of the Wildthunder squad, an energetic, golden-haired middle-aged man reported.

Shaq was overjoyed. “Haha, wonderful! Quick, bring those bags over to me. For this action alone, I will award all of you a hundred thousand gold coins. When we reunite with my royal father, I will disburse the gold.” Shaq was extremely excited.

There were thirty people in the Wildthunder squad. A hundred thousand gold coins each was only a total of three million gold coins. But the wealth contained within those ten bags surely was worth more than a hundred million gold coins.

“Come, Lord Linley. You pick two bags first,” Shaq said very magnanimously to Linley.

The usefulness of a magus in pitched group battles had been totally put on display. This sneak attack by magic of Linley’s had killed four and heavily injured the remaining three. If Shaq had ordered his men to directly attack, quite a few of them probably would’ve died.

Linley walked directly over to Prince Louis’ master’s corpse, the middle-aged man. He hefted each of the four bags. As he did so, Linley indeed noticed something strange. Three of the bags were very light, very ordinary.

But the last bag... it seemed very small, and the object inside was only the size of a man’s palm, but its weight... was over a thousand pounds.

“Something the size of a hand but over a thousand pounds in weight?”

Linley was stunned.

He had never heard of anything this dense and heavy. Even gold and diamonds were much lighter than this material. The size of a hand, but over a thousand pounds...

“Lord Linley?” Shaq walked over. “Have you chosen?”

“No need to choose. I’ll just go with these two.” Linley randomly grabbed another bag from the remaining three, then slung the two bags over his back.

Seeing this, Shaq felt very happy as well. What he worried about the most was that Linley would open every single bag to take a look inside, then make his decision. This would be quite unfair to him. But Linley had just casually hefted the bags on a single person, then chose two of them.

All of Shaq's subordinates were now carrying bags.

"Let's go." Shaq was now in a wonderful mood.

Linley was riding on a horse as well, but while riding the horse, Linley had cast the Floating Technique on himself. Given his power as a magus of the seventh rank, using a spell of the fifth rank was extremely easy. Linley used the levitational powers of the Floating Technique to counteract the extra weight of that mysterious object.

This allowed the horse he was riding to continue galloping without strain.

"Grandpa Doebling," Linley immediately pressed him. "Take a look and see what I have inside these two new bags of mine?"

"Oh, you got some treasures?" Doebling Cowart, who had been napping inside the Coiling Dragon ring, was suddenly full of energy. He immediately used his spiritual energy to directly sense what was inside Linley's two bags.

"Within that first bag is a brocade box wrapped in several layers of cloth. Inside the box there is a matching pair of beautiful jade crystals. They should have quite the history, but I don't know where they are from," Doebling Cowart said.

"The second bag... ah?!"

Doebling Cowart cried out in surprise. "What is it?" Linley's heart clenched in excitement. He knew that the second bag had to be the one containing the strange item weighing over a thousand pounds, because the item inside the second bag wasn't a perfectly rectangular box.

"Adamantine. Adamantine ore. There's actually a fist-sized chunk of adamantite ore in the Yulan continent. This... this is astonishing," Doebling Cowart said in amazement.

Hearing the words 'adamantine', Linley's heart clenched yet again. Adamantine didn't actually exist in the material plane. It only came from other planes, and it was so tough and durable that supposedly even most Deity-level combatants couldn't easily break it. When he was jailed in the Radiant Temple, that lock with some adamantite alloyed into it would've been hard for even a Saint-level combatant to break. From this, one could tell how tough adamantite

was.

“A fist-sized chunk of adamantine ore. This... this is more valuable than even a Saint-level magicite core. How could there be such a huge chunk in the world?” Doebling Cowart simply couldn’t believe it.

“A fist-sized chunk is ‘huge?’” Linley was rather confused.

## The City of Hess

Doehring Cowart was rendered momentarily speechless by Linley's question.

"Linley, I must tell you, if a weapon has just a little bit of adamantine alloyed into it, the weapon's durability will increase to a very high level. If a weapon were to be totally made out of adamantine, even if you gave it to a Saint-level combatant and let him try to break it, he wouldn't be able to scratch it, no matter how long he tried."

Doehring Cowart was very resigned.

Linley clearly didn't fully appreciate how valuable adamantine was.

"Then, Grandpa Doehring, can I use this adamantine to forge a 'heavy sword?'" After listening to Doehring Cowart previously explain the benefits to using heavy weapons, Linley wanted to acquire a heavy sword of his own. Originally, Linley was planning to spend some money and buy a good one. But now that he had this chunk of 'adamantine', naturally he had to put it to good use.

Right now, Linley didn't lack money.

"Forge a heavy sword with adamantine? A heavy sword is rather large, and will most likely need this chunk of adamantine to be mixed with some other metals. But of course, I don't know anything about blacksmithing myself. However, I have heard that forging weapons out of adamantine is extremely difficult. Adamantine is extremely tough. Most master weaponsmiths are not capable of melting and reforging it." Doehring Cowart chuckled.

Linley nodded to himself.

Adamantine was a material which even Deity-level combatants supposedly would find tough to break. But since it was possible for adamantine to be forged into a weapon, naturally there had to be a special technique for it as

well. Only, the technique was probably too difficult.

“Got it.” Linley nodded.



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Linley and Second Prince Shaq continued speeding northwards, and the farther north they went, the sparser the magical beasts became. After travelling another three or four hundred kilometers without a single magical beast appearing, they reached an area where the local cities and towns hadn't had any people die.

But these villages and towns were very sparsely populated. Most likely, people were afraid of the danger and had moved northwards as well.

“Haha, good, it seems the Kingdom of Hess hasn't fallen.” Shaq laughed loudly. “It's been quite a few days. Finally we can rest.”

Shaq looked at Linley.

Seated on his horse, Linley seemed as solid and unmovable as an old oak, not wavering in the slightest, seeming very stable. His face was calm, and he had been silent, giving him a reliable, taciturn aura. Towards Linley, Shaq had always felt a hint of dread. Although he was a few years older than Linley, he always respectfully addressed Linley as 'Master Linley'.

“Master Linley, look. That's a military camp up ahead.” Shaq and Linley were riding side by side.

Linley nodded.

The Radiant Church had clearly decided to set up a line of defense here at the borders of the Kingdom of Hess. Seeing those countless military camps lining the border, one could tell how many soldiers had been deployed here.

“Two kingdoms and five duchies lost. That's about a third of the territory of the Holy Union. I expect the Radiant Church isn't willing to retreat any further.” Linley chuckled. Linley and the knights made their way through the guarded pass, and were quickly allowed in.

This guarded pass was to defend against magical beasts.

Naturally, no humans would be denied entry.

“Second Prince, shall we rest here?” Linley seemed very tranquil.

“The City of Hess is one of the agreed upon places that my royal father and I settled upon. We still have around three hundred kilometers before arriving at Hess City. If we hurry, we should be able to reach there by nightfall today,” Shaq said unguardedly.

“Hess City!”

Linley memorized this name. “Clayde. Hess City shall be where you die.”



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They continued their journey. Linley, Shaq, and the thirty mounted knights kicked up a trail of dust in their wake. By the time Linley and Shaq saw the City of Hess, the sun was just setting, casting its red glow upon the earth.

“Hess City, the capital of the Kingdom of Hess. It’s only slightly smaller than Fenlai City.” Seeing the silhouettes of the enormous city walls, Linley couldn’t help but be awed.

How much manpower had it taken to erect such giant walls?

Arriving at the gate to Hess City, Linley and his squad found their way barred.

“Dismount!” A gate guard of Hess City ordered in a loud voice.

“Why should we dismount?” Shaq shouted back angrily.

The gate guard saw that Shaq’s group was definitely an extraordinary one, and thus answered the question. “His Highness has ordered that no horses may be ridden within the boundaries of Hess City. Everyone, right now Hess City is overflowing with people. There’s simply not enough space to ride horses. It’s best if you all dismount.”

“Let’s dismount.” Linley smiled at Shaq.

Shaq nodded.



Linley and Shaq could both imagine that many people had fled here from the two ruined kingdoms and the six destroyed duchies. Most likely many of the people living near Hess City had fled here as well. Those two kingdoms and six duchies possessed a combined population of hundreds of millions.

Even if 90% had died, millions would have survived. And of course, there had been no magical beast sightings within hundreds of kilometers of the Kingdom of Hess, so virtually all of the people who lived in that area had survived.

“So many people.”

Stepping into Hess City, Linley, Shaq, and the knights were all shocked. Hess City normally could only accommodate at most a million people. But by Linley’s calculations, right now there were at least several million people within the city, because every single street was clogged. Even in the City of Fenlai, Linley had never seen anything like this.

“Go find a hotel first, then come back here to pick me up.” Shaq immediately ordered his men to go reserve a hotel suite.

“Lord Linley, let’s go eat dinner first,” Shaq said with a laugh, and of course Linley wouldn’t refuse. Shaq immediately led Linley and the others to a nearby restaurant. The bottom floor of this restaurant was full, but there were still dining rooms available in the upper levels.

“Three rooms,” Shaq said magnanimously.

But when they sat down and Shaq saw the prices on the menu, he was somewhat flabbergasted. Shaq grabbed the nearest waiter and shouted angrily, “Do you take me for an idiot? With prices like this, a table of dishes would cost several thousand gold coins. You are trying to cheat me!”

Although this restaurant was a high class one, Shaq, as a prince, had naturally been to many high-class restaurants.

For a restaurant of this class, a hundred gold coins a table was generally more than enough.

“Milord, if you don’t wish to eat, you can leave.” The waiter seemed very confident. “Right now, Hess City is filled to the brim with people, including countless nobles who fled here with their valuables. All of them demand high-

quality service and are willing to pay for it.”

Shaq was instantly stunned by these words.

Right. The people who had managed to flee from the two kingdoms and the three duchies most likely all belonged to powerful clans or were powerful combatants themselves. Those powerful clans naturally wouldn't penny-pinch.

“Hmph.”

Shaq snorted, but still placed his orders in the end. After Shaq and Linley had finished eating their meals...

“Your Highness, Second Prince.” The people who had gone looking for a hotel came back.

“And? Have you found a place?” Shaq asked.

That guard shook his head. “All of the rooms in the major hotels have been booked. Although we only went to five large hotels, we could already tell this wouldn't work. There were too many people trying to make reservations. Your Highness, we arrived at Hess City too late. The members of the clans belonging to the five duchies and the Kingdom of Hanmu arrived much faster than us.”

Shaq nodded.

“Sit and eat first.” Shaq turned to look at another guard, one with short jade hair. “Are you full yet? If you are, help me find a manor and buy it. I expect the prices here within Hess City will be quite high, but no matter how pricy it is, buy it. Remember, though; don't buy something which is too gaudy and too large. This manor will only be a temporary lodging place for myself and my royal father.”

“Yes, your Highness,” the guard acknowledged, and then left to find a manor.

Linley quietly drank his wine, watching everything.

“A manor? I wonder which manor it will be. When Clayde comes, most likely he will head to that manor as well.” By finding out the place where Clayde was going to stay, all he would need to do was lie in wait. When the opportunity came, he would send Clayde to his death.



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Hess City. A very ordinary manor on Keyan Road.

Under normal conditions, a manor in Hess City like this that was not located in the city center would generally be worth two or three hundred thousand gold coins. But Prince Shaq had to pay a million gold coins just to buy it. A large number of nobles and magnates had entered Hess City, causing inflation to skyrocket.

That night.

Linley also stayed in this manor for now.

“That Clayde, after he comes, should be residing in one of these two or three rooms.” Linley was walking in the middle of the manor, carefully inspecting its internal layout. He was making preparations for killing Clayde in the future.

The night wind was cool and refreshing, but Linley ignored it, only paying attention to the location and layout of every part of this manor.

“Lord Linley, why haven’t you rested yet?” that enchanting consort said to Linley in a soft voice, standing in the doorway to her room.

“Found being in my room to be too stuffy. Thought I’d get some fresh air,” Linley replied casually.

“I also feel it’s rather stuffy.” That consort walked out of her room towards Linley. Her coquettish gaze only made Linley feel apprehensive, and he immediately said, “Then Royal Consort, you should get some air. I’ll go back to my room and get some rest now.” After he spoke, Linley immediately left.

Watching Linley leave, the consort couldn’t help but let out a little hmp of displeasure.



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The next morning.

“Second Prince, Royal Consort, Princess. I have some things to take care of, so I’ll leave now.” Linley bid his farewells.

“Lord Linley, why are you in such a rush to leave? Wait for my royal father to come back first, then decide.” Shaq immediately tried to convince him to stay.

Linley laughed coldly inside. “Wait for your royal father? If Clayde saw that I was living here, I probably would have to openly attack and kill him. The chance of killing him openly is lower than assassinating him.” Linley had already had enough setbacks.

This time, Linley wanted to be absolutely certain of success.

“This time, I’ll have to endure and be patient. I’ll wait for the moment when Clayde and Kaiser aren’t together. When Clayde is alone, I’ll kill him. That will definitely be successful.” Linley knew that so long as Kaiser was there, he wouldn’t be able to kill Clayde quickly.

But as long as Kaiser was not present, he definitely would succeed.

“Then where are you going, Lord Linley?” Shaq asked.

“I plan to leave Hess City and continue north. As for where exactly, I’m not yet sure,” Linley replied. “Alright. Second Prince, Royal Consort, Princess. I bid you farewell.”

Bowing slightly, Linley led Bebe away from the manor.



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That very night, Linley moved into a small courtyard on the same street as Shaq’s manor. The manor which Shaq had bought took up a large amount of space, enough to very comfortably fit thirty people. But the house which Linley bought was very small, only enough for three or four people.

This little courtyard had still cost Linley fifty thousand gold coins. In normal times, a few thousand coins would have been enough.

“Ah Da, Ah Er, have you seen anyone new enter the manor?” Linley was seated at his dinner table as he asked these two men.

“No.”

Linley had casually picked these two men up from the streets for his employ. Right now, in Hess City, there were many commoners as well as nobles. After fleeing here, those commoners had no food to eat and place to live. All they could do was beg or do manual labor. Thus, it was easy for Linley to find people to work for him. A salary of two gold coins each day, with food and board included, was an opportunity which any of these impoverished refugees would have fought for.

Linley saw that these two men seemed the reliable sort, and so had chosen them.

“At night, you can sleep, but by day, keep a close watch. As long as any strangers enter the manor, especially in large numbers, you have to inform me. Pay special attention to a man who has only one hand,” Linley repeated his instructions.

There was no need to keep a watch at night, because the gates to Hess City were barred shut at night.

And Linley was confident that with two people watching during the day, as long as Clayde’s men arrived, he would definitely find out. Shaq and his people believed that Linley had really left the city, but in reality, Linley continued his watch from a courtyard very near them.

“Clayde, I’ll just keep waiting here for as long as it takes. Let’s see how long it takes you to get here.” Linley’s gaze was cold.

Seeing the look on Linley’s face, those two brothers shuddered.

“Go,” Linley ordered.

“Yes, milord.”

## The Clan of the Violetflame Warriors

A sky-blue magus robe and a magistaff in hand.

This was how Linley was dressed now as he walked on the streets.

On this outing, Bebe had stayed behind in the little courtyard on Keyan Road. Linley's instructions were for Bebe to instantly tell him once Clayde appeared. Given the soul link between Linley and Bebe, no matter how far apart they were, they would be able to sense each other's thoughts.

Today, Linley had made this outing for the sake of his 'heavy sword'.

"Hrm?" Linley noticed a weapons shop nearby and immediately went inside.

The weapons shop's business was quite average. There were only two customers inside inspecting the various weapons. Linley went straight to the counter and asked calmly, "In Hess City, who is the best weaponsmith around?"

The store clerk glanced at Linley. Realizing he was a magus, the shopkeeper immediately said courteously, "Milord magus, the master blacksmith of our shop possesses very high skills. There's no weapon that he cannot forge."

"My question was, in Hess City, who is the best blacksmith around?" Linley's face turned cold. "If your so-called master blacksmith is unable to produce the weapon I need, don't blame me when I wreck your shop."

The store clerk was frightened by Linley's words. Previously, he had wanted to try and win a customer, but now he no longer dared to make any rash claims. "Milord magus, the number one blacksmith of Hess City resides in West Hess City. His name is Master Corby, and his weapons shop is quite close to the Radiant Temple."

"Corby?" Linley memorized this name. He immediately left.

"But milord magus," that store clerk said in a quiet voice.

“Hrm?” Linley turned his head to look at the clerk, curious what he had to say.

The store clerk said respectfully, “Milord magus, if you want a good magistaff, you should go to a magic weapons store. These weapons are all meant for warriors to choose from.” In the eyes of this store clerk, it was very strange indeed for a magus to not only want a weapon, but to want one made by a master blacksmith.

The weapon of a magus was his magistaff.

And in order to produce a magistaff, one needed high skills in alchemy.

Linley’s lips curved upwards in a smile, and he left the weapons store.

Half an hour later, Linley arrived near the Radiant Temple in the west part of the city. Based on Linley’s investigations, the Holy Emperor of the Radiant Church and the other Saint-level combatants hadn’t arrived in Hess City yet. Supposedly, only a single Cardinal had arrived here, but to better assist the ruler of the Kingdom of Hess, he had taken residence along with the soldiers at the border.

As for where that group of Saint-level combatants of the Radiant Church had gone, no one knew.

“I really hope that ‘King’ of the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts killed a few of those Saint-levels,” Linley secretly said to himself. The Holy Emperor Heidens had used the Divine Baptism against Linley. Although Linley didn’t know what exactly it had been meant to do, he knew that its divine power had tried to merge into his very soul.

His soul.

This was the most important core of a person. Linley was certain that Heidens had been up to no good.

“This is the weapons store of the so-called number one blacksmith in Hess City?” Linley glanced at the weapons store. The store was tens of meters long, and on each side of the door there were two powerfully built warriors in beautifully wrought armor standing guard, weapons in hand.

This weapons store did indeed seem quite impressive. Clearly, it was much

better than the store which Linley had gone into just a while earlier.

Entering the weapons store, Linley saw that the attendant was a beautiful young woman. The woman's eyes lit up when she saw how Linley was dressed, and she courteously said, "Milord magus, what sort of weapon do you desire? Come with me. We have all sorts of beautiful court rapiers."

Linley chuckled with resignation.

It seemed this woman thought that he was nothing more than a magus who wanted a weapon to play around with.

"I heard your Master Corby is here?" Linley said directly to the woman.

The attendant nodded. "Right. Master Corby is the head blacksmith here, and he is definitely the number one blacksmith within the City of Hess. I've never heard of Master Corby being unable to forge a weapon of any sort."

"Oh? Have Master Corby come out. I wish for him to make me a weapon," Linley said immediately.

"Have... have Master Corby come out?" The attendant laughed awkwardly. "Milord magus, Master Corby never comes out to meet with customers. If you wish to meet with Master Corby, you'll have to go find him yourself. And... if you want to meet Master Corby, you need to spend some money, as otherwise, he won't meet with you."

Linley had to admit that this man really did know how to put on airs.

"Fine. How much money for me to go meet him?" Linley asked directly.

"Not much. Fifty gold coins," the attendant said.

Fifty gold coins was nothing to those members of rich clans, but this price was enough for a commoner to survive off of for a year or two.

"Fifty?" Linley withdrew a sack of gold from his clothes. This sack contained a hundred pieces of gold. Linley poured out fifty, then instructed, "Lead the way." Linley usually only carried a hundred gold coins on him. He had magiccrystal cards on him, after all. If he needed any more, he could go withdraw it.

"Yes, milord magus." The attendant was extremely happy.





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Five minutes later, guided by the attendant, Linley arrived at a very plain-looking residence. The guard to the residence clearly was familiar with the attendant, and let them in immediately.

When Linley saw Master Corby, the man was reclining on a chair while sipping a cup of tea. This Corby's hair was totally white, but the powerful muscles bulging from his body showed that he was still a powerful warrior.

Most weaponsmiths were extremely powerful warriors.

"Master Corby, this lord magus wishes to meet with you," the attendant said respectfully.

Corby glanced at Linley and laughed. "Youngster, my fees are quite high. If you want me to forge a weapon for you, at the very least it will cost you ten thousand gold coins."

Linley could sense this Master Corby's approximate level of power.

If he wasn't a warrior of the seventh rank, then he was one of the eighth.

"Fine." Linley nodded. "But this weapon will use special materials. Right. Can the other people here leave?"

"Of course." Master Corby nodded at his servants, who immediately left.

Master Corby looked at Linley curiously. "Youngster, what special materials do you bring?"

"Adamantine," Linley said directly.

Previously sitting lazily on his chair, Master Corby suddenly shot to his feet as though thunderstruck. He stared at Linley in amazement. "What did you just say? Adamantine? Did I hear you correctly?" Adamantine was a material that appeared only in legends. He, Corby, had been a weaponsmith his entire life, but hadn't seen any.

"Right. I intend to use adamantine to forge a weapon. Are you capable of doing so?" Linley looked expectantly at Master Corby.

Master Corby hesitated for a moment, but in the end, he sighed and said, “Youngster, I actually do not have the ability to smith adamantine.” Hearing these words, Linley couldn’t help but feel disappointed.

“Youngster, can... can you show the adamantine to me?” Corby said somewhat awkwardly.

Linley could understand the desire of a master blacksmith like Corby to see adamantine with his own eyes. He immediately removed the adamantine chunk from his bag and handed it over to Master Corby. This thousand-pound chunk of adamantine didn’t seem to be heavy at all to Linley.

However, when the totally unprepared Master Corby accepted the chunk of adamantine, his hand couldn’t help but sink down.

“It really is heavy.” Master Corby recovered and easily lifted it back up.

But Corby still glanced at Linley in surprise. For this Linley to be able to hold this heavy chunk of adamantine so easily meant that he was at least a warrior of the sixth rank.

“Adamantine. Having seen it, I’m satisfied.” Corby stared lovingly at the chunk of adamantine, but in the end he returned it to Linley. In truth, Corby did feel a hint of greed and desire for it, but he knew that for Linley to so casually hand it to him meant that Linley wasn’t worried at all about being unable to get it back.

What’s more, Corby also knew that he didn’t have the ability to smith this adamantine chunk.

“Master Corby, do you know who is capable of smithing adamantine?” Linley asked.

Corby considered for a moment. “From what I know, the Radiant Church has specialized master weaponsmiths. The Radiant Church has a long history and it should possess the techniques needed to smith adamantine. I expect that the master weaponsmiths belonging to the Four Great Empires and to the Cult of Shadows should all be in possession of such techniques as well.”

Linley nodded.

“Farewell, then.” Linley left, somewhat disappointed.

Linley knew from the beginning that adamantine wasn't so easily smelted, and so he had made some mental preparations. Departing from this location, he headed back towards his own residence. But halfway back, Linley suddenly heard a familiar voice.

"Third Bro."

Linley immediately turned his head to look.

Yale, George, and Reynolds were staring back at him in astonishment.

"Boss Yale. Second Bro. Fourth Bro." Linley immediately ran over excitedly. He didn't expect to be able to meet with his dear bros again. Under Yale's invitation, Linley decided to go to the Dawson Conglomerate's headquarters to have a good meal with his bros.

Within a very secluded manor.

Linley, Yale, Reynolds, and George were all happily exchanging stories of recent events.

"You want to find a master weaponsmith? Mm, I don't know any either." Yale shook his head.

Reynolds said questioningly, "Third Bro, you said adamantine? What is adamantine?"

Neither Reynolds, nor Yale, nor George had ever heard of adamantine.

Adamantine was simply too rare and too precious.

"Linley, we just barely had a chance to meet last time. Only today do I have the opportunity to have a good chat with a genius like you." Monroe Dawson walked in from the main hall, holding his big belly and chuckling. "Hey, did you just say adamantine?"

Linley nodded. "Lord Chairman, I managed to acquire some adamantine and plan to use it to forge a weapon. But I'm not able to find a master weaponsmith capable of forging it."

"Oh."

What sort of a person was Monroe Dawson? How could he not know what

adamantine was? “You actually address me as Chairman? You and Yale are like brothers! Just call me Uncle. You say you need to find a master weaponsmith who can smelt adamantine? I happen to know one.”

Linley actually didn’t feel too excited upon hearing this.

Because even if Monroe Dawson knew a person, that person most likely wasn’t in the City of Hess.

“Uncle Monroe, who is that master weaponsmith?” Linley asked.

Monroe Dawson grinned. “That master weaponsmith is known as Master Vincente, the leader of the Hyde clan.”

“Vincente?” Linley was a bit curious.

Suddenly, Linley started. “Uncle Dawson, what clan did you just say he belonged to?”

“The Hyde clan,” Monroe Dawson replied with a chortle.

Linley had totally memorized that book he had read back in his clan’s manor which introduced the Four Supreme Warriors. One piece of information included within was the clan names of the Four Supreme Warriors. The Violetflame Warriors clan... was the Hyde clan! However... there was more than one clan named ‘Hyde’, and thus this Hyde clan wasn’t necessarily the clan of the Violetflame Warriors.

“You thought of them? Haha. Right. This Hyde clan is just like your Baruch clan. They are a clan of Supreme Warriors. The Hyde clan lived within a small city in the Holy Union’s Kingdom of Hanmu. After this catastrophe, they fled here to Hess City,” Monroe Dawson said with a laugh.

“They are here in Hess City?” Linley was surprised.

“And they are living right next to my manor. I personally arranged for them to be put there,” Monroe Dawson continued.

Linley stared at Monroe Dawson in astonishment.

Actually, Monroe Dawson knew several people who were capable of smelting adamantine. The master weaponsmith of the Dawson Conglomerate was capable of smelting adamantine as well. But none of those other people whom

Monroe Dawson knew were currently in Hess City. Thus, Monroe Dawson only mentioned this one person.

## The Furnace

Linley was in a dire need of a good weapon, and so Monroe Dawson decided to immediately take Linley to Master Vincente. Monroe Dawson, Linley, Yale, George, and Reynolds all went in a group to a dwelling not too far away.

“Lord Chairman!” The guard at the entrance immediately bowed respectfully upon seeing Monroe Dawson.

The servants and guards of the Hyde clan had been personally arranged for by Monroe Dawson. They all belonged to the Dawson Conglomerate to begin with.

“Lord Dawson has arrived?” A middle-aged man who had been quietly lying in rest in the front courtyard instantly scrambled to his feet and walked over. His face filled with gratitude, he said, “Lord Dawson, if you want to see me, all you have to do is send someone for me. I would just come to your place.”

This Vincente truly did feel grateful towards Monroe Dawson.

In this past half year, Monroe Dawson had been extremely friendly and courteous towards his Hyde clan, but hadn’t required anything of them. In particular, when they had fled for their lives, if the Dawson Conglomerate hadn’t assisted them while they were in the Kingdom of Hanmu, perhaps many more members of the Hyde clan would have died.

“Haha, let’s talk inside.” Monroe Dawson slapped Vincente on the shoulders.

“Alright.”

Other members of the Hyde clan, such as Vincente’s father, and Vincente’s two sons all came out.

“Come, Mr. Vincente, let me make some introductions.” Monroe Dawson beamed as he pointed at Linley. “The three of you should already know my son, but this one here is that genius magus I have often mentioned to you. He is...”

“Linley of the Baruch clan, a master sculptor and a genius magus,” Vincente

continued.

Vincente turned his eyes to Linley. Even Vincente's father and his two children turned to stare at Linley in awe.

"Linley, I imagine you know about our Hyde clan." There was a very special sentiment visible in Vincente's eyes. Although both the Hyde clan and the Baruch clan had decayed in power over the years, in their heart, they were filled with pride and a certain type of arrogance.

The clans of the Four Supreme Warriors had five thousand years of history!

No matter how far they had fallen, this sort of innate pride and arrogance sprung from their hearts.

Two descendants of two Supreme Warrior clans looked at each other, sharing a very special moment.

"The Violetflame Warrior clan," Linley said modestly. "In the books passed down within our Baruch clan, there are careful descriptions regarding the Hyde clan, one of our fellow Supreme Warrior clans."

Hearing these words, Vincente couldn't help but feel as though he had been given quite a bit of face, and felt all the more well-disposed towards Linley. "Linley, let me introduce you. This is my eldest son, Yotian Hyde. This is my second son, Trey Hyde." Vincente clearly was very proud of his sons. "Linley, my two sons are quite talented as well. But of course, compared to you, they have quite a distance to go."

Yotian and Trey only nodded, but from the fierce look in their eyes, they clearly didn't submit to their father's claims that the two brothers were a bit inferior to Linley.

"Haha, alright, Mr. Vincente. I've come today to ask you for your help," Monroe Dawson said directly.

Vincente immediately said magnanimously, "Lord Dawson, if you need anything, just tell me. As long as I am capable, I will definitely do my best." In this past half year, the Dawson Conglomerate had helped the Hyde clan out in many matters. But the Hyde clan hadn't been able to repay them at all. After all, the Dawson Conglomerate hadn't asked them to do anything.

The feeling of owing someone wasn't a good one.

Monroe Dawson laughed while gesturing at Linley. "Linley wants a good weapon. I want to ask you to be the one to forge it for him."

"Forge a weapon?" Vincente looked at Linley. "Linley, a weapon for yourself?"

"Yes." Linley nodded.

A gratified look was in Vincente's eyes. Nodding, he said, "Right. We descendants of the Four Supreme Warriors can't be physically puny and weak. We must train as warriors, and naturally we must have a fine weapon. Tell me, what sort of weapon do you desire?"

Both Vincente, and his two sons, upon hearing that Linley was a magus genius, felt a bit of disdain towards him in their hearts. In their eyes, the Four Supreme Warriors descendants should be powerful, invincible warriors. Now that Linley was asking them to help him make a weapon, they felt very happy.

"A heavy sword," Linley said slowly. "Mr. Vincente, I am 1.9 meters tall. You decide how long the heavy sword should be. You should know what length would be most suitable to someone of my height."

Vincente was a bit surprised. "A heavy sword? Not a greatsword or a warblade?"

Greatswords and heavy swords were two different types of weapons. "A heavy sword," Linley said with certainty.

"Alright. Any other requests?" Vincente was the leader of the Hyde clan. The descendants of the Hyde clan weren't just powerful warriors; they were all extremely skilled blacksmiths as well.

Linley removed the bag he was carrying. "The materials for the heavy sword must include this."

From within the bag, Linley withdrew that fist-sized chunk of adamantine ore.

Just by looking at it, Vincente couldn't tell that this was adamantine. After all, even Vincente had never seen adamantine before. He immediately asked curiously, "What is this ore called?"

"Adamantine."



Linley replied directly.

“Adamantine?!” Vincente, his father, and his two sons all stared in astonishment at the fist-sized chunk of black rock in Linley’s hands.

Vincente suppressed the excitement in his heart. Looking at Linley, he said, “Can you let me take a look?”

“Yes.”

Vincente carefully accepted the chunk of adamantine. Although he had never seen adamantine before, Vincente knew that adamantine was extremely heavy, and so he had prepared himself for it. Indeed...

“At least a thousand pounds.” Vincente’s eyes shone. “Indeed. Adamantine is over a hundred times heavier than gold. The legends are true.”

Vincente suddenly came to his senses, and he stared at Linley in astonishment. “Linley, you want to use this entire chunk of adamantine in the forging of your heavy sword?”

“Right. All of it,” Linley replied.

Vincente shook his head repeatedly. “Linley, this adamantine ore is a thousand pounds by itself. Using adamantine as the base, the other materials you will need to alloy it with will have to be of high quality as well. Given the size of your heavy sword, it will most likely weigh nearly three thousand pounds. This will be my first time forging such a heavy sword. Three thousand pounds! You want it for yourself? Even most warriors of the seventh rank won’t be able to use it freely. Even a warrior of the eighth rank will be slowed down by it, despite being able to wield it with ease.”

“Mr. Vincente, just worry about the forging.” Linley laughed.

Dragonblood Warriors were immensely strong, physically. Comparatively speaking, in terms of battle-qi, Dragonblood battle-qi was a bit weaker.

Of the Four Supreme Warriors, the Dragonblood Warriors and the Undying Warriors possessed greater strength. The founder of the Baruch clan, Baruch, was someone who had dared to fight head on against a Nine-Headed Serpent Emperor and win, killing it in the end.

A Nine-Headed Serpent Emperor was an incredibly large creature, with strength to match. It could be considered one of the most powerful Saint-level magical beasts in existence. But Baruch still dared to fight it head on and killed it. From this, people learned how powerful and strong the Dragonblood Warriors were. Vincente glanced at Linley, then nodded. “Within my clan, we do indeed have secret methods for forging adamantine. But it will be hard for me to acquire all of the other rare ingredients right now.”

“Let me handle that,” Monroe Dawson said.

Vincente nodded. Given the power and influence of the Dawson Conglomerate, procuring some ores should be very easy. Vincente looked at Linley. Solemnly, he said, “Linley, adamantine weapons are indeed very formidable. If you only use a small amount of adamantine ore in your weapon, I’ll still be able to sharpen and put an edge on it. But if you want to use this much adamantine, I’m afraid that at most, I’ll be able to make the edges of the sword slightly thinner. But I won’t be able to put an edge on it.”

A thousand-pound chunk of adamantine ore! Vincente had never even heard of such a thing.

The sturdiness of the weapon it was used to forge into would be incredible. To put an edge on and sharpen such a weapon? Vincente knew his own limits.

“Unable to put an edge on it?”

Linley suddenly thought back to the records of his clan. The first Dragonblood Warrior had used a warblade to do battle, but the later Dragonblood Warriors did not. One had even used a massive warhammer, relying purely on weight and power.

A three-thousand-pound heavy sword would totally be a match for that warhammer of his ancestors.

“If you can’t put an edge on it, so be it.” Linley was very confident. Such a heavy sword with such weight would be able to smash magical beasts to death with sheer kinetic force when wielded by the terrifying strength of a Dragonblood Warrior.

“Good. As long as we have the other ores needed, I can immediately begin

the forging for you. A single weapon won't take more than half a day of work," Vincente said confidently. He, Vincente, had forged countless weapons, and he was very confident in the secret forging methods of his clan.

Monroe Dawson laughed. "Vincente, then can you provide me with your secret recipe for forging adamantine now?"

"Fine. I'll go get it now." Vincente immediately left.

The Dawson Conglomerate's efficiency level was terrifyingly high. Before nightfall, they had procured a large pile of quality ores. In truth, the secret forging methods of the Hyde clan didn't require any specific ores, as every material had possible replacements as well.

But the materials provided by the Dawson Conglomerate were the best of the best.

That night.

"The quality of these materials is extremely high, and all of these ores are high value ores." Staring at the ores, Vincente was so excited that his face had a ruddy glow. Laughing loudly, he said, "Linley, with such good materials to work with, I'm afraid that the heavy sword will be slightly heavier than I anticipated."

"That's fine." Linley laughed.

A weapon weighing just a bit over three thousand pounds could still be easily wielded by most warriors of the ninth rank, much less the astonishingly strong Dragonblood Warriors.

"Alright. Tomorrow morning, I'll begin," Vincent said heroically.

That night, Linley didn't go back to his own manor. He chatted mentally with Bebe, who very obediently stayed home and didn't come over. As far as Bebe was concerned, right now his life consisted of eat, sleep, eat, sleep. This was the type of life he liked.

Early morning. The sky slowly brightened.

Those three Hyde clan members, father and two sons, were bare-chested as they began the forging process. Vincente was the primary worker, while Yotian and Trey assisted on the sides. The flames spat forth by the bellows were at an

incredibly high temperature.

“Hiss, hiss.”

Vincente Hyde’s body began to emit a blue flame, which quickly merged with the flames in the furnace. The color of the flames in the furnace actually changed as well, and those other ores began to slowly liquefy. Only the adamantine ore didn’t change at all.

Vincente picked up a cup of greenish herbal liquids and poured it directly over the adamantine ore. “Hiss, hiss.” The green liquid actually began to transform the adamantine ore somehow, as it actually slowly began to melt as well.

Finally, the general shape of a sword could be seen.

“Clang!” “Clang!” “Clang!”

The forgehammer smashed down again and again, the speed of the blows coming at a terrifyingly fast rate. The hammer danced in Vincente’s hands, giving everyone present the sense of watching an artistic performance. Clearly, Vincente’s hammer strokes had a certain rhythm to it, and the form of the heavy sword began to become more and more clearly defined.

“Hiss, hiss.”

Vincente’s body was constantly emitting that blue flame, keeping the heavy sword under high temperatures at all times. He continued hammering away at it for three hours. The heavy sword, which originally had been all sorts of colors, gradually turned into a pitch-black color. Vincente was covered in sweat, and his face was turning a bit white. This was perhaps the most tiring forging project he had ever done.

“Give me mountain spring water,” Vincente shouted loudly.

His elder son, Yotian, immediately brought over a nearby barrel of water, then mixed into it a cup with a different, pre-prepared liquid inside. Using the secret liquid ingredients of their clan along with mountain spring water would definitely produce optimal tempering results.

“Hiss, hiss.” The heavy sword was placed within the barrel.

Watching by the side, Linley and Monroe Dawson’s eyes lit up. After being

tempered, the heavy sword would more or less be complete. But just at this time, the gloomy, overcast sky suddenly boomed with thunder, catching everyone off-guard.

“Success!” Vincente pulled the heavy sword out, his face filled with excitement. He raised it high in the air, laughing loudly, “Haha, Linley, success! This is the finest creation I have ever made!”

“BOOOOOM!”

A terrifying sound could be heard as a bolt of blue lightning suddenly forked down, striking directly on top of the heavy sword!

## The Heavy Sword, 'Bladeless'

This naturally generated bolt of lightning slashed down at high speed, and was many times faster than electrical bolts which thunder-element magi could produce. Nobody present was able to react in time, and the lightning bolt crashed onto the upraised heavy sword.

“Ah!” Vincente let out a pain-filled scream as his body was suddenly enveloped in a wild blue flame, which even had some silvery white flame mixed within!

“Thud!” The heavy sword fell to the ground.

At the same time, Vincente collapsed as well, his entire body twitching, especially his right arm, which had been charred badly enough that the scent of burning flesh could be smelled. Even after collapsing, Vincente’s body continued to jerk about, and blood was pouring from his mouth.

“Father!” The two brothers Yotian and Trey let out simultaneous cries as they immediately ran forward.

“Mr. Vincente!” Both Linley and Monroe Dawson were shocked as well.

This natural bolt of lightning had carried an enormous amount of energy. It wasn’t unheard of for even powerful combatants to die due to being struck by lightning. All of them ran over, surrounding Vincente, as Monroe Dawson roared out, “Quick, have Mr. Armand come, quick!”

Armand was a light-style magus under Monroe Dawson’s command who also specialized in medicine. He was extremely skilled at healing people.

“Yes!” Seeing this, the gate guard was also frantic, and he rushed to find the magus Armand.

Magus Armand arrived shortly afterwards. He was an old man with a snowy white beard. Without saying a word, he immediately invoked a light spell. The

totally burnt and charred right arm of Vincente began to quickly and visibly heal. Soon, all traces of the injury were gone.

“I... I’m fine.” Vincente managed to force out these words with difficulty.

“How are your internals?” Armand asked immediately.

A powerful warrior was easily capable of sensing his body’s internal condition. This assessment would be more accurate than a magus’ external observations.

Vincente shook his head. “I’m fine. I just need a little time, and I will be alright.”

“Mr. Armand, there’s no further need for you to concern yourself with my father’s injuries,” Yotian said bluntly as well.

These words raised the suspicions of Monroe Dawson, Linley, Reynolds, George, and everyone else. They could all see that right now, Vincente was very weak. Vincente was a very powerful warrior; for him to be so weak now meant that he clearly had suffered an enormous injury.

But suddenly, Linley remember a passage from his clan’s records regarding the Violetflame Warriors.

A Saint-level Violetflame Warrior possessed a power known as the Nirvana Rebirth. Generally speaking, they were able to recover from any wounds at an astonishing speed.

“This Master Vincente is only at the ‘blue flame’ level, and has just barely managed to enter the ‘white flame’ level. He is quite a distance away from the highest ‘violet flame’ level. Most likely, he doesn’t have the Nirvana Rebirth ability yet, but he should still be able to heal his wounds.” Linley understood.

The Four Supreme Warriors.

The Dragonblood Warriors could be considered as the warriors with the greatest combat potential, while the Violetflame Warriors were famous due to their Nirvana Rebirth ability. The Tigerstriped Warriors were known for their attacking speed, while the Undying Warriors were famed for their strength and endurance.

“Uncle Dawson, Master Vincente has secret techniques for recovering from

his wounds. There's no need for him to take any medicine," Linley said.

Monroe Dawson nodded, then gave instructions to Armand. Armand spoke some well-intentioned words of guidance to Vincente, then left. As for Vincente, he lay down and rested for around ten minutes, after which he looked much better.

Linley couldn't help but feel astonished. The regenerative capabilities of the Violetflame Warriors really were something special.

"Linley, your heavy sword." Immediately after recovering a bit, Vincente began to worry about his masterpiece. "Quick, bring it over and let me take a look. I hope no damage was caused to the sword."

Only now did any of them pay attention to the discarded heavy sword. All of them were amazed! The formerly pitch-black sword now had a faint blue glow on its surface, as though a layer of frost had formed atop it.

"Let me see!" Vincente said urgently.

Linley grabbed the heavy sword and immediately gave it to Vincente. Of all the people present, only Vincente had any true knowledge regarding weapons.

Vincente still hadn't fully recovered from his injury, and so even lifting the sword up was hard for him. He was only able to grasp the hilt after allowing the tip of the sword to rest against the ground. Vincente's face was extremely solemn, and with his left hand, he began rap against the flat of the heavy sword's blade.

"Dang!" "Dang!" "Dang!"

A series of crisp, clear sound could be heard. Vincente began to apply more and more force to each blow, and the ringing sounds were growing louder as well. Vincente rapped every single part of the heavy sword, constantly changing positions.

While doing so, Vincente was staring intently at the sword while listening to the sounds.

Next to him, Linley, Monroe Dawson, and the others had stopped breathing. They knew that most likely, Vincente was assessing the heavy sword to see if



the bolt of lightning had caused any damage to it or had altered it somehow. After all, the bolt of thunder had struck it just after it had been quenched in the liquid solution.

“Riiiiing.” With a single flick of Vincente’s finger, the entire heavy sword emitted a beautiful sound. Hearing this almost perfect, rich, smooth sound, a look of wild joy appeared on Vincente’s face.

“Heaven’s will. Heaven’s will.”

His face filled with wild joy, Vincente turned to look at Linley. “Linley, it must be that heaven itself desired for you to possess this divine sword.”

“Mr. Vincente, what’s the situation with this heavy sword?” Monroe Dawson asked.

Vincente explained, “The hardest part of forging an adamantine weapon is bringing out the full potential of the adamantine, since the alloyed metals are all significantly inferior to adamantine. Although the secret method of my clan allows me to alloy a high percentage of the other metals with the adamantine, I of course am not able to alloy it 100% perfectly.”

“In other words, the internals of the sword that I had just forged were not perfectly consistent, and there were minute inconsistencies in each spot.”

A look of disbelieving joy was on Vincente’s face. “But I didn’t expect that right after I finished quenching the sword, I would get struck by that bolt of lightning, which caused all of the remaining internal irregularities in the sword to be fused perfectly. The full potential of the adamantine has been released. I simply can’t believe that something like this happened. This is heaven’s will. Heaven’s will!”

Linley was overjoyed as well.

“Third Bro, congratulations.” Yale, Reynolds, and George all began to grin. They all understood. After having withstood this lightning strike, the quality of Linley’s heavy sword had just improved by another level.

“And not just that. Look. There’s a faint blue glow on the surface of this heavy sword. I’ve touched the surface of it, and it is unbelievably slick and smooth. Most likely in the future, when you kill someone using it, no blood will stick to

it.” Vincente chortled.

“Killing without being stained by blood.” Monroe Dawson sighed in praise as well.

The creation of this heavy sword was indeed miraculous, causing everyone present to sigh in amazement.

“This heavy sword was originally pitch black, but now it has a layer of blue light on it. At first glance, one would say that it was dark blue.” Yale sighed in amazement.

This sword really did have quite the majestic aura to it.

“Yotian, Trey, bring me the measuring sticks,” Vincente instructed. After finishing the smithing of a sword, naturally he would have to see what the sword’s exact dimensions were. Linley could feel that this sword was very heavy, but he couldn’t say exactly what its weight was.

Monroe Dawson only chortled happily as he watched them take the measurements for this sword.

“The sword is 1.41 meters long. It weighs...” Yale and the others quickly began to weigh the sword, but when they saw the figures, they were all astonished.

“3,600 pounds! The heavy sword is 1.41 meters long, and 3,600 pounds heavy!” Reynolds began screaming in a high-pitched voice. This was an extremely domineering heavy sword! And as far as it was length-wise, it was just about right for Linley.

What’s more, Linley wasn’t finished growing yet, and his strength would continue to increase as well. Naturally, this sword would only grow more and more easy to use in the future.

“Third Bro. What is the name of this heavy sword? Quick, pick a name.” Yale was the first to say.

Vincente and the others all looked at Linley.

Reynolds interjected, “This was hit by a lightning bolt. I say, how about calling it Heavenly Thunder? That’s really cool, right?”

“That’s way too vulgar.” George shook his head.

“How about Lightning’s Majesty?” Reynolds continued.

Yale and everyone else began to laugh at how increasingly excited Reynolds was becoming. Monroe Dawson teased, “Reynolds, why call it Lightning’s Majesty? Let’s just go ahead and call the sword Reynolds.” Reynolds let out a snort, then pouted and fell silent.

“It doesn’t necessarily have to be related to lightning.” Linley laughed. “Since there’s no way for this sword to be sharpened, then let’s just call it ‘Bladeless.’” Linley casually picked this name. It was a very simple one, but Linley liked it.

“Bladeless? The heavy sword, Bladeless? Not bad.” Yale nodded.

“Bladeless.”

Vincente, Yotian, Trey, and the others all savored the name for a while, then nodded.

That day, Monroe Dawson gifted Linley with a fine sheath for a heavy sword. It was a deep blue color and forged from precious metals. It was only half a meter long, but had openings on both ends. Linley could sheath his heavy sword into it from either direction, with half of it remaining visible.

This was how sheaths for heavy swords were usually designed. Scabbards that were meant to cover the entire sword were simply too long, and once the warrior removed the sword from the sheath, the meter-long sheath would be very impractical and get in the way. This half-meter-long scabbard was very light and wouldn’t cause any hindrance.

That night at a banquet.

Linley dressed in his warrior clothes and carried this heavy sword with him. Thanks to his long-term training, his 1.9-meter-tall body was rippling with muscles, and his warrior’s clothes put his charisma on full display. With this heavy sword on his back, he did indeed have the aura of a powerful heavy swordsman.

“Haha, Linley.” Monroe Dawson laughed as he looked at Linley. “In my opinion, nobody who sees you would believe that you were a genius magus.”

Linley was slightly startled, but then he laughed as well.

Dressed like this, naturally it would be hard for others to tell that he was a magus.

“I remember when we first arrived at the Ernst Institute, when we were in our first year, Third Bro was only nine. Even then, he was able to easily lift up and throw that nine-year-old who won the tournament quite a distance. Ever since then, I knew that Third Bro was extremely talented as a warrior as well.” Yale chortled.

Everyone was enjoying this banquet immensely, and after having acquired this heavy sword, Linley felt very pleased as well.

“When I have some time, I’ll definitely have to analyze and train in using heavy swords.” Linley made his decision. When he had originally acquired the Bloodviolet Godsword, Linley had also spent several months before completely comprehending all the best ways to use a flexible sword such as Bloodviolet.

But Linley had the feeling that, comparatively speaking, training with Bloodviolet wasn’t that hard, only fast and strange.

But this heavy sword weighed 3,600 pounds.

On the surface, it would seem that the techniques for using a heavy sword were simple. Block, smash, *etc.* But Linley knew that was just the most basic of movements. Using this sword to its full potential definitely wouldn’t be that easy. He knew this because his clan’s records had described the ways in which that ancestor of his had used a massive warhammer. Clearly, there were deep mysteries with regards to how one used weapons.

To bring out a heavy weapon’s full power and potential?

This was very hard.

But upon succeeding, it would possess tremendous power.

The banquet ended.

Linley began to engage in some simple sword stances in an empty courtyard within the Dawson Conglomerate’s estate, trying to feel for the heavy sword’s balance, and how it felt when thrusting and chopping. Just as Linley was beginning to totally immerse himself in getting a basic feel for the technique

behind using such a sword...

“Boss, boss! Come back, quick! That Clayde has finally appeared!” Bebe’s excited voice suddenly rang out in Linley’s mind.

Linley instantly came to his normal senses.

“Clayde is back.” Linley felt his previously calm heart suddenly fill with excitement, and his body suddenly began to brim with power. He didn’t have time to explain too much to his bros. He bid a simple farewell, and then headed for his own residence at high speed.

## A Missing Hand?

Bearing the adamantine heavy sword on his back, Linley quickly made his way through the streets. However, just from appearances, nobody could tell how heavy it truly was, and so Linley didn't attract any notice from bystanders.

"Clayde finally came. I've waited so long!" Linley suppressed the excitement he felt. "Calm. This time, no matter what, I can't make any mistakes again."

The first time, he had thought he had a better than 90% chance of success, but unexpectedly, that Saint-level Fateguard had appeared out of nowhere and caused Linley's plan to fail. This time, Linley didn't want to make any mistakes.

"Linley," Doehring Cowart's slightly hoarse voice rang out. "Remember, you previously were together for a period of time with Shaq and his men. Upon Clayde's return, Shaq might report that fact to him."

"Understood."

Linley had thought of this possibility long ago. But for the sake of being able to find the place where Clayde would end up, he had to travel alongside Shaq, which resulted in them arriving together in Hess City. He definitely could not kill Shaq, because once Shaq and his group of men died, then Clayde perhaps wouldn't show himself at all.

"I had to act in this way. But even if Clayde knew that I had travelled along with Shaq for a time, there's nothing he can do, because... I already know his whereabouts. There's no way he can escape." Linley was totally confident. At the same time, Bebe, who was spiritually connected to him, was watching over Clayde and his men.

As they chatted, Linley arrived at Keyan Road.

In order to prevent himself from being seen by Clayde's men, Linley immediately headed towards his residence via a series of back alleys.

A black blur suddenly travelled several dozen meters and leapt into Linley's arms.

"Bebe." Laughing, Linley looked at the little Shadowmouse in his arms.

Bebe's eyes were gleaming as he delightedly conversed mentally, "Boss, I saw Clayde come here not too long ago. But I only caught a glimpse of half his face before he entered the manor. Boss, those two people you employed were too useless. They didn't notice him at all."

"Hrm?"

Linley was somewhat suspicious. He had ordered those two to stay on the lookout. Logically speaking, as soon as Clayde had appeared, they should have noticed him.

"Milord, milord!"

Ah Da and Ah Er ran over and said respectfully, "Milord, we just saw a large group of people enter that manor not too long ago."

"A large group of people?" Linley immediately asked. "Was one of them missing a hand?"

Ah Er shook his head. "No, milord. Milord, you ordered us to pay attention to any groups of people entering the manor, and you also told us to watch for a man with a missing hand. But we didn't see anyone with a missing hand in that group."

"Impossible," Linley said with certainty. "There definitely was a man with a missing hand."

Bebe had already seen half of Clayde's face, and given Bebe's eyesight, he definitely wouldn't have been mistaken. Since Bebe was certain he had seen him, then Clayde was definitely in that group.

"Definitely?" Hearing how certain Linley was, the man felt awkward. "Milord, perhaps... perhaps there were too many people in the group, so my elder brother and I didn't see him."

Linley frowned.

Too many people?

Originally, when he fought with Clayde's squad at the palace, Linley and Bebe had killed quite a number, leaving only ten or so knights remaining. And given the number of magical beasts on the road here, it would be quite exceptional if all ten of Clayde's men were still alive. How could this be considered 'too many people'?

"Many people? How many?" Linley asked.

"Very many. At least seventy or eighty," the man said haltingly, seemingly uncertain. "Regardless, there were very many. That group suddenly appeared and then entered the manor. We two brothers couldn't clearly see every single person in the group. Perhaps there really was a man with a missing hand amongst them."

Linley was confused.

Seventy or eighty people?

Even when he had attempted to kill Clayde in the palace, Clayde's Wildthunder squad had only thirty or so people. What's more, after having been reduced in numbers by himself and Bebe, how could so many more people have appeared out of nowhere?

Linley didn't understand it.

"Boss, there really were a lot of people," Bebe's voice also sounded out now, in Linley's mind. "By the time I noticed Clayde, he was just about to enter the manor. I only had the chance to catch a glimpse of half his face. But behind him there were at least fifty or so people. But as to how many people entered the manor before Clayde, I'm not too sure."

Linley definitely trusted Bebe, of course.

"That many people?" Linley wondered to himself.

"Alright, you can go now. This is a reward for you and your brother. Keep watching for me." Linley tossed the half-filled sack of gold, which had fifty coins in it.

Accepting the sack, he took a peek inside through the opening. The insides were filled with gleaming gold. This half-bag had to have near fifty coins in it!



His heart began to be filled with excitement. When he had escaped here to Hess City, he hadn't even been able to feed himself. Now, after only having worked for Linley for a few days, the man tossed him a sack with fifty gold coins? How could he not be wildly excited?

"Thank you, milord. Thank you, milord." He made up his mind. He and his elder brother would consider keeping a close watch on the people inside the manor. He immediately departed, then ran to the top floor of the nearby restaurant where he and his elder brother kept watch.

Within the courtyard.

All alone, Linley was pondering what he should do next.

A white light shone out from the Coiling Dragon ring, transforming into the white-robed, white-haired, white-bearded Doebling Cowart. Doebling Cowart stroked his beard. Chuckling, he said, "Linley, what's wrong? Are you in a bad mood?"

Linley lifted his head up to look at Doebling Cowart. Upon seeing his Grandpa Doebling, Linley felt his heart calm down a little. With such an experienced elder by his side, at least Linley wouldn't grow frantic or feel unsure of himself.

"Grandpa Doebling. I'm wondering where that group of people with Clayde came from," Linley said.

Doebling Cowart chuckled. "You are wasting your time wondering about this. Why don't you act instead? Hide in a corner of a wall in their manor and take a look for yourself. By then, you will know exactly who these people with Clayde are."

Linley began to laugh.

Right. Why was he wasting time?

"Carrying this heavy sword will still impact my speed." Linley removed his adamantite heavy sword, then entered his bedroom and placed it under his bed, then grabbed his bedsheets.

Standing on Linley's shoulders, Bebe stared curiously at the adamantite heavy sword. He mentally asked Linley, "Boss, is this heavy sword the treasure

which you had created for you using that adamantine ore?”

Linley laughed and nodded.

“How heavy is this heavy sword?” Bebe asked curiously.

“3,600 pounds,” Linley replied honestly.

Bebe rubbed his little nose with his paws in surprise, while his beady little eyes spun around in shock as well as he stared at the adamantine heavy sword.

“Enough. You’ll have plenty of time to look at it later.” Linley put down the bedsheets, hiding the heavy sword.

“Ah. Hey boss, I suddenly remember something. That Clayde probably already knows that you are right here.” Bebe looked at the interspatial ring on Linley’s finger and cried out in alarm.

“What? Why?” Linley was extremely shocked. “Boss, you personalized and bound your Bloodviolet Godsword using a drop of blood. I remember you saying that when you were imprisoned within the Radiant Temple, although Bloodviolet was confiscated, you could still sense where it was. Interspatial rings are also personalized through blood. Wouldn’t Clayde then be able to sense the location of his interspatial ring?” Bebe urgently transmitted his thoughts to Linley.

But hearing this, Linley only began to laugh.

“Haha.” Standing next to them, Doehring Cowart began to laugh as well. Only, Bebe wasn’t able to hear Doehring Cowart’s laughter.

Immediately upon leaving the City of Fenlai, Linley had already questioned Doehring Cowart regarding this interspatial ring he had taken.

“Bebe,” Linley laughed as he explained. “This interspatial ring is different from a divine artifact such as Bloodviolet. Technically speaking, an interspatial ring isn’t a divine artifact, just a very valuable magical item. Its basic underpinnings are quite similar to the magicrystal cards, which use fingerprints to personalize and recognize an owner, while interspatial rings use blood to do the same. Only the owner of an interspatial ring can open it and take out its contents. However, when a magical item is taken away, there’s no way for the owner of it to sense

the exact location of his item. Do you think divine artifacts are that common? Even my adamantine heavy sword, Bladeless, isn't at the level of divine artifacts."

Divine artifacts.

It was impossible for a divine artifact to be forged within this material plane, in the Yulan continent. Things such as the Coiling Dragon ring and the Bloodviolet sword were both very ancient items.

"The Coiling Dragon ring had suddenly emitted a terrifying burst of energy back at the Radiant Temple and saved me. What's more, when using magic through it, it reduces the amount of mageforce and spiritual energy needed to a sixth of normal. Bloodviolet, in turn, can become flexible or straight as the wielder chooses, and is virtually indestructible."

Linley had a certain theory.

It was already a fact that the Coiling Dragon ring had secrets hidden within that he hadn't yet discovered. That terrifying burst of energy at the Radiant Temple was proof.

As for Bloodviolet?

For it to be used as a focusing seal for that mysterious magical formation meant that it definitely had special qualities to it as well. Only, right now Linley was still too weak and couldn't discover what was so special about it.

"Bloodviolet." Linley glanced at the sword at his waist which he was wearing like a belt. What was the real ability of this mysterious Bloodviolet flexible sword?

"Bebe, you stay here for now," Linley instructed.

"Got it." Bebe obediently remained within the courtyard, while Linley stealthily slipped out of his residence and headed quietly towards Clayde and Shaq's manor.

Linley pressed himself against one of the walls of the manor that Shaq had purchased.

"Snick."

Linley's sharp claws emerged. He easily cut a small opening into the wall, then transformed his hands back to normal as he peered inside through the opening.

That night Linley had stayed at the residence with Shaq, he had memorized the entire layout, including the manmade hill and which rooms were which. Linley had chosen to make his cut in a very particular location; through this cut, he was able to see into both the front courtyard and the back courtyard, without anything obstructing his vision.

"My royal father."

Linley's sensitive ears actually managed to pick up the conversation between Shaq and Clayde in the back courtyard. Linley carefully peered in that direction. Indeed, Clayde and Shaq were walking shoulder by shoulder within Linley's field of vision.

"It's Clayde." Linley watched carefully.

But what he saw utterly stunned him. "Clayde's hand...his hand..."

Right now, both of Clayde's hands were in perfect condition. But Linley had clearly seen Clayde's hand fall off after being cut. He had even stolen the interspatial ring from the hand. There definitely was no mistake.

"To regenerate a lost hand would require the services of a light-style Arch Magus of the ninth rank at least." Linley was astonished.

When Clayde left, he didn't have a single magus with him. How did he get mixed up with an Arch Magus of the ninth rank?

"Royal father, how did you end up encountering forces belonging to the Radiant Church? Those people are all so formidable," Shaq said in a somewhat astonished voice.

Clayde nodded. "Of course they are. These people are amongst the most terrifying people the Radiant Church leads. The Ascetics led by Lord Fallen Leaf have many combatants of the ninth rank amongst them. Travelling by their side, we were quite safe the entire time."

Clayde was speaking in a normal tone. Logically speaking, someone from the opposite side of a distant wall shouldn't be able to hear him. But Linley, as a

Dragonblood Warrior, possessed freakishly enhanced hearing, and heard every word clearly.

“A group of Ascetics? Led by Lord Fallen Leaf?” The look on Linley’s face changed.

Lord Fallen Leaf was a peak-stage Saint-level combatant. And he had with him a group of freakishly strong Ascetics, quite a few of whom had reached the ninth rank.

## With Bated Breath

Linley quietly left, returning to his own manor.

On the road back from Clayde's residence to his own, Linley's face was a mask of unhappiness. This news he had just received had made Linley think that things would be much more difficult now.

"Linley. What decision have you come to?" Doehring Cowart appeared from within the Coiling Dragon ring.

There was still a degree of distance between Linley's residence and Clayde's manor. Doehring Cowart, this five-thousand-year-old ghost of a peak-stage Saint-level combatant, wasn't afraid that Lord Fallen Leaf would see him here.

"Me?"

Linley balled his fists. "Endure. I can only endure and wait."

Doehring Cowart nodded with satisfaction. He had watched every step of Linley's journey and growth. Doehring Cowart felt affection and love for Linley as he might a grandson.

He didn't wish for Linley to act too rashly.

"Linley. Don't worry." Stroking his beard, Doehring Cowart spoke confidently. "That Fallen Leaf probably just let Clayde travel along with him since it didn't inconvenience him. He definitely won't stay with Clayde for too long. In the past, when Clayde was still the king of a kingdom, his status was already much lower than that of Fallen Leaf. As for the current Clayde... the Kingdom of Fenlai itself has been destroyed, making him even less important. What's more, based on my calculations, the new Holy Capital which the Radiant Church will select most likely will not be Hess City. Thus, Fallen Leaf won't stay here too long."

Linley nodded.

The previous Holy Capital, 'Fenlai City', had been totally annihilated by the

army of magical beasts from the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts. Only rubble was left. The Radiant Church definitely would not permit such an event to happen again. Naturally, they wouldn't erect the new Holy Capital in a location like Hess City, which was so near their new borders.

After all, the 'King' of the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, Dylin, had previously said that the magical beasts under his domain could possibly expand to the point of taking up half of the Holy Union. Right now, they had only taken up a third of the Holy Union's territory. If they were to truly take over half, then Hess City would fall into that area as well.

Heidens and the other top level members of the Radiant Church simply did not have confidence in their ability to resist this Deity-level Dylin.

Although the Radiant Church still had untapped powers of its own that it hadn't put on display yet, once they deployed those powers against Dylin, it would be equivalent to them expending all of the resources they had saved up over ten millennia in one battle.

Heidens didn't dare to act in such a way.

"Just wait." Linley took a deep breath, forcing himself to remain calm. He already knew where Clayde was. So long as he didn't make any mistakes, Clayde definitely wouldn't be able to escape.

Within a restaurant opposite of Shaq's manor, the same restaurant where Linley's two servants maintained their vigil over Shaq and Clayde.

That very day.

Wearing a very ordinary sleeveless sweatshirt, Linley's powerful chest muscles were plainly visible. Those two mighty, muscled arms and that heavy sword on his back gave the impression of an extremely strong man.

A heavy sword warrior!

Linley's current appearance was a very commonly seen one. Warriors prioritized muscular training the most, and thus many of them had powerful bodies, and quite a few used heavy swords as well.

"Two plates of roast meat and two bottles of Bullfighters," Linley said in a

deep voice.

“Sir, please take a seat first.” Seeing how powerful Linley appeared, the waiter was extremely respectful to him. Linley selected a seat located towards the interior of the restaurant which still offered a clear vantage point to see through the door and the windows towards Clayde’s manor.

The waiter immediately pulled the chair out for Linley to sit on.

“Sir, please wait a moment.” The waiter said with a smile. At this time, another waiter came over with those two bottles of Bullfighters. Bullfighter was a type of extremely strong liquor, particularly favored by powerful warriors.

Sneaking a glance at the heavy sword on Linley’s back, the attendant was secretly shocked. “Oh my lord. What a long, thick heavy sword, and from the coloration, it must have been made from special materials. It must weigh at least a few hundred pounds. This gentleman must be an extremely strong warrior.”

At this restaurant, when the servers were bored, they would sneak peeks at their various customers. After having done so for a long time, their eyes had become quite sharp and their guesses accurate. Seeing how easily Linley was carrying this heavy sword about, they could immediately tell that Linley was an extremely powerful warrior.

The elder of the two brothers whom Linley had stationed in this restaurant walked over at this time.

“Take this roasted meat back and give it to Bebe.” Linley didn’t give him a chance to speak before issuing orders.

“Yes, milord.”

The elder of the two brothers didn’t have anything important to do either. He immediately carried out Linley’s instructions and took the roast meat back.

And then, Linley just quietly sat in the restaurant and drank his liquor.

Linley drank wine very slowly. A single bottle of liquor was enough to last him two or three hours. He just continued to drink while keeping an eye on Clayde’s



manor.

That night.

In the higher levels of the restaurant, a travelling bard was belting out songs, and the entire bar was extremely rowdy. Quite a few warriors were shouting and laughing at each other.

Because of the catastrophe, Hess City was more lively than it had ever been.

Many powerful warriors patronized this restaurant, and all of them were very energetic. They actually began to compete in arm wrestling.

“Ten thousand gold coins! The winner gets ten thousand gold coins!” the contest organizer shouted in a high pitched voice.

To many of the powerful warriors who had fled here after the disaster, although ten thousand gold coins wasn't a small sum of money, it wasn't a particularly large sum either.

“I'll join. These ten thousand gold coins are mine.” A 2.2-meter-tall brown-haired warrior with a barrel-sized chest sat down. His arms were definitely thicker than most people's legs.

“Hrmph, I'll give you a go.”

A red-haired man with a body similar to Linley's walked over and sat down as well. The two immediately stretched their arms out and clasped hands. Immediately afterwards, the muscles in their arms began to bulge.

Those warriors drinking next to them began to shout loudly in encouragement.

“This sort of life isn't that bad.” Linley knew that waiting for Fallen Leaf to leave would be an extremely boring event. Who knew how long Fallen Leaf would stay? One day? Two days? Ten?

Linley turned to watch with interest as well.

“Neither of these two are weak. They are at least warriors of the sixth rank.” Linley nodded to himself. Right now, experts could be seen everywhere in Hess City.

Their arms locked against each other, these two warriors were exerting ten thousand pounds of force against each other.

“Grrr!” That brown-haired warrior whose arms were thicker than most people’s legs suddenly let out a mighty shout, and all of the veins on his arm began to pop out, criss-crossing his arm like worms beneath the skin. Anyone looking at him would think that his veins were about to explode at any moment.

The red-haired man’s face had turned red as well, as he wasn’t willing to back down in the slightest.

“Creak. Creak.” The table underneath their arms was beginning to shiver as well.

The tables and chairs in this restaurant were all made from steel, and were extremely sturdy. Generally speaking, powerful warriors were able to carefully calibrate and control the amount of power released from their wrists as they engaged in arm-wrestling above the table. For the table to begin quivering due to their strength was a sign that both men were at their limits.

“Haha, let’s go Harold!”

“Damnit, Harold, try harder!”

“Second Bro, don’t lose in front of me!”

All the warriors who were drinking around them were howling loudly in support. Slowly, that large man with massive arms named Harold gained a slight advantage, causing the red-haired warrior to immediately try desperately to resist.

“Haaaaah!”

With a loud roar, Harold smashed his opponent’s arm against the table, causing an impression to be left upon the steel table.

“Haha, I win!” Harold laughed loudly.

“F\*ck. Second Bro, beat it. Let me come. This big dumb idiot wants to win ten thousand gold? Hmph.” A one-eyed red-haired warrior walked over.

The restaurant was very rowdy, and those energetic warriors screamed and shouted, while up above, the travelling bard was also singing loudly in order to

get that bit of gold the restaurant had promised him.

Noisy.

But in this rowdy environment, three or four people remained silent. The warriors around them quite conscientiously didn't disturb those people. All of these warriors had significant outside experience, and they had good judgment. They knew who they could afford to offend, and who they could not.

The next morning, soon after Linley sat down.

"Hrm?"

Linley suddenly saw a familiar face. Lord Fallen Leaf.

As skinny as a beggar, Lord Fallen Leaf casually walked out of Clayde's manor and departed, with two barefooted Ascetics dressed in sackcloth by his side.

"He left? But only Fallen Leaf and two Ascetics have left." Linley considered for a moment. He knew that many Ascetics had come on this journey, and many experts were amongst their ranks. Right now, only three had left.

"Continue to wait." Linley took a sip of liquor. He would keep waiting.

Clayde, Shaq, and the others sent off Lord Fallen Leaf, watching him leave from the gate.

"Royal father, there is something that I forgot to tell you." Shaq slapped himself on the head. "Royal father, Lord Linley travelled with us for a time, but two days ago he left. He was heading north."

"Linley."

Hearing this name, Clayde almost shouted aloud in surprise.

This Linley had nearly taken his life on two separate occasions.

"What's wrong, royal father?" Shaq questioned. As far as Shaq could tell, this wasn't a major issue. After all, the Kingdom of Fenlai had already been annihilated. Their royal clan was royal only in name now, and not in truth. It would be surprising if Linley had actually continued to be loyal to them.

"He travelled with you. Did he know that you are living here?" Clayde immediately asked.

“Yes. He even stayed here a night,” Shaq said, confused.

Clayde’s heart began to shudder. “This Linley is definitely still in Hess City.” Clayde knew that Linley wanted to kill him, and wouldn’t leave just like that.

“No worries. There’s still a large group of Ascetics living here.” Clayde comforted himself.

“But when the Ascetics leave, I will leave with them.” Clayde made his decision. Only by travelling together with the Ascetics would he feel safe.

Clayde carefully looked in every direction.

He even had this strange feeling that Linley was looking at him from somewhere nearby.

A day passed. A second day passed. Aside from going back at night to sleep, Linley spent all his time at the restaurant. Once, a foolish person tried to cause Linley some trouble, but Linley booted him from the back of the restaurant to the front of the restaurant with one kick. Thereafter, no one else disturbed Linley.

In the blink of an eye, six days passed.

During these past six days, aside from Fallen Leaf and those two Ascetics, none of the other Ascetics had left.

Within Clayde’s manor.

“Everyone, why are you in such a rush to leave?” Clayde looked at the three representatives of the Ascetics in front of him, trying to persuade them.

An old, golden-haired man said calmly, “Clayde, we must head towards the new Holy Capital now. Sorry for inconveniencing you these past days. We’ll leave now.”

These three Ascetics totally ignored Clayde’s entreaties as they prepared to leave immediately.

“Milords, you are heading to the new Holy Capital? I wish to go as well. How about I travel alongside you?” Clayde said immediately, while at the same time, he instructed his son Shaq, “Shaq, prepare some things. We leave immediately.”

At this point in time, Clayde didn't feel any sense of security at all.

If only Kaiser was left with him, Clayde didn't feel confident that Kaiser would be able to protect him against both Linley and that freakish magical beast of his.

"Travel along with us?" The golden-haired old man frowned.

In truth, they were not making a trip towards the new Holy Capital at all. They had a secret mission.

"Impossible. We are under strict orders from the Church," The golden-haired man said coldly.

The other two looked coldly at Clayde as well. "If you follow us secretly, you should know what the end result will be." After they spoke, the three turned and left, leaving behind a pole-axed Clayde.

Clayde hadn't expected that these Ascetics would forbid him from travelling with them.

"Milords!" Clayde chased out from the main hall, but the fifty or so Ascetics had already left the manor via the gate. Not a single one of them turned to look back at him.

Clayde considered what to do. He didn't dare to follow them. Although the Radiant Church taught that men should be benevolent, when they decided to act against someone, they were definitely without mercy. Right now, Clayde was no longer of particular use to the Radiant Church. Those Ascetics definitely would not fear to kill him.

"Royal father." Shaq walked over, looking at Clayde.

Clayde frowned. He was quiet for a moment. Then, he gave his orders. "Let's leave from the back gate. We will leave immediately. Yes, immediately. The danger grows with each passing minute."

## The Full Story

Within the restaurant.

Seeing a large group of Ascetics leave Clayde's manor, Linley was wildly exultant. At a glance, Linley could tell that over fifty people were in that group of Ascetics. For such a large group of them to leave most likely meant that all of them had left.

"It's been six or seven days. By now, it's almost certain that Shaq has told Clayde about our meeting. Most likely, Clayde has already been able to guess that I'm nearby."

Linley casually tossed down a few gold coins. Suddenly, gusts of air began to wrap around him, and moving like the breeze, Linley agilely flew out of the restaurant.

Despite bearing the heavy sword on his back, with the assistance of wind magic, he still moved with great ease. But of course, this was due to Linley having become a magus of the seventh rank. If a magus of the third rank had been the one to cast the spell, the effect wouldn't have been nearly as good. "Bebe, watch the back door," Linley mentally instructed Bebe.

"Boss, got it."

As Linley rushed towards one of the exterior walls of Clayde's manor, he began to mumble the words to another spell – Windscout.

"Whoosh!"

With Linley at the center, a gust of air suddenly spread out in all directions. Closing his eyes, Linley could clearly sense everything the Windscout had detected.

"Hrm? Gathering near the back gate?"

The Windscout spell could only detect bodies and objects. It couldn't actually

make out faces clearly. However, through the usage of the Windscout, Linley had already been able to discover that the people inside the manor were all hurriedly moving towards the back courtyard. Clearly, they were all getting ready to flee.

“Hmph. As predicted.” With a quiet movement, Linley flowed into Clayde’s manor, moving into the front courtyard with movements as light as the wind. Quietly but quickly, Linley made his way on the inside paths towards the back courtyard.

“Hurry, hurry!” Clayde berated angrily.

“Let’s go from the back gate. We are heading out immediately. We are leaving Hess City,” Clayde said directly.

The royal consort was confused. “Your Majesty, aren’t we all living here just fine? Why—”

“Whap!”

Clayde slapped her across the face.

“Enough crap.” Clayde snarled.

“Hurry up. Forget about the horses. You two, you are responsible for the Princess and the Royal Consort.” Clayde ordered two of his knights, and then had a third one open the back gate.

Linley, hiding behind a manmade hill, watched this all while laughing coldly.

“As I thought. Not a single Ascetic is left.” With a leap, Linley retreated at high speed, moving to a place where Clayde and Kaiser wouldn’t be able to see him, then he leapt past the wall. And then, Linley turned and moved at high speed to the back gate. But just as Linley had rounded the corner, he came to a sudden halt.

Bebe was right next to the back gate.

“Creaaaaak.” The back gate began to open.

Bebe immediately scurried over at high speed to a patch of wild grass nearby. Given that Bebe was only fist-sized, the wild grass was totally capable of covering and hiding Bebe’s entire body.

“Bebe. When Clayde comes out, tell me right away.” Linley hid behind the corner, and his entire body began to be covered with black scales. “Snick.” His forehead, back, elbows, and kneecaps all began to sprout sharp spikes.

And that long, iron-whip-like draconic tail sprouted out as well.

Linley’s black eyes suddenly transformed into a dark gold color, the same color as the eyes of the Armored Razorback Wyrms.

Total Dragonform! “Wind-style supporting magic – Supersonic.” At the same time, Linley reinforced himself with a wind spell. After having completely Dragonformed, Linley felt that his body was full of limitless power.

Right now, that 3,600-pound adamantite heavy sword didn’t have any impact on Linley at all.

To a mighty warrior who could easily lift up something weighing hundreds of thousands of pounds, what was a mere 3,600? Comparatively speaking, it was like asking an ordinary man who could lift one hundred pounds to carry a one-pound item on him. Would it impact him?

Clayde continued to urge his men, and one Wildthunder knight after another began to step out of the back gate.

Clayde himself walked through the gate, with Shaq by his side. And then the princess and the royal consort, under the protection of the Wildthunder knights, headed out as well. As for Kaiser, he was at the very end, serving as their guard and escort.

“Boss, Clayde came out.”

Just after Clayde stepped out of the manor, Bebe’s voice rang out in Linley’s mind. The eyes of Linley, who had been hiding behind the corner this entire time, suddenly began to shine.

“Whoosh!”

A mighty leap forward, combined with the wind around him propelling him forward at high speed.

“Swish!”

In the blink of an eye, a black, human-sized blur slashed through a distance of



seventy meters, charging directly at the back gate to Clayde's manor. Somewhat caught off guard, Clayde turned to look, and when he did, he saw that this human-shaped blur was already next to him. That familiar figure made Clayde's heart quail. Before he even had a chance to call out or to react, a powerful force suddenly bound him.

"Don't move. Otherwise. You die." Linley's voice was transmitted directly to Clayde's ear.

"Ah!" The royal consort had just stepped out of the gate. Upon seeing Linley, she was so frightened that she immediately screamed. But then, with a 'snick' sound, the consort's head went flying off.

Linley retracted his claws.

The severed head of the consort oozed blood everywhere, while her body collapsed to the floor.

"Mon... monster!" The princess, terrified, retreated backwards.

"Release his Majesty!" The Wildthunder knights who had left along with Shaq immediately charged over, but as they did, a black blur flashed towards them. The little Shadowmouse, Bebe, who had suddenly transformed to half a meter in length, landed on the ground. As he did, those two warriors who had wanted to charge over collapsed, as half of their necks had been severed.

"None of you resist. Resistance is futile," Linley's cold voice rang out.

At this time, Kaiser charged over as well.

"Lord Kaiser, what... what is that monster?" The princess was terrified. But Shaq, whom Clayde had explained everything to, knew that this monster was actually Linley.

The aberration in front of them was covered from head to toe in black scales, and there were spikes sprouting from his forehead, knees, elbows, and back. Its scale covered feet and claws were all extremely sharp.

And what's more, it had an iron-whip-like draconic tail.

Right now, that draconic tail was wrapping tightly around Clayde, preventing him from moving at all. With each small swaying motion of Linley's draconic tail,

Clayde's body swayed as well.

This scene stunned everyone present.

"Kaiser. This time, you don't have any chance," Linley's cold voice rang out.

A pained look was on Kaiser's face. He knew that even if he fought one on one against Linley, victory was no sure thing. What's more, Linley had that freakish magical beast companion who was on the same level of power as him.

Kaiser wasn't confident in his ability to deal with either Linley or the magical beast, Bebe.

And now that Clayde had been caught by Linley, he, Kaiser, did indeed have no chance at all.

"Lin... Linley! Release my royal father!" Shaq shouted angrily.

Linley glanced at Shaq with his cold, dark golden eyes. Shaq shivered, no longer daring to speak. Right now, Linley's appearance had stupefied everyone present. Those Wildthunder knights who had followed Clayde had also battled against and been slaughtered by Linley and Bebe in the past. They knew exactly how powerful Linley and his freakish magical beast companion Bebe were.

"Linley." Just as Clayde was going to beg for mercy...

"Crunch!" "Crack!"

Linley actually tore off Clayde's ring finger and index finger, then casually tossed them in the direction of the princess and Kaiser's group.

"Ah... ah!" Clayde couldn't refrain from howling from the agony of having his fingers ripped off.

"Clayde, I'll tell you right now that you are definitely going to die," Linley said casually.

Clayde turned his fierce, tiger-like glare towards Linley.

But what welcomed his gaze was Linley's cold, emotionless pair of dark gold eyes.

"Right now, you have two choices. The first is to be tortured to death. The second is to tell me who you gave my mother to, and who killed her. And then,

I'll let you die an easy death," Linley said calmly.

Linley knew very well that the best way to deal with someone like Clayde was to lay it out clearly for him.

Otherwise, Clayde would think that there was still some hope of living. He would grit his teeth and refuse to answer, for the sake of that hope.

"No! If you are willing to spare me, AH!!" Linley once again remorselessly ripped out another one of Clayde's fingers. Calmly, Linley said, "You are definitely going to die. The only question is, will you tell the truth early and spare yourself some pain and suffering?"

"Your Majesty!"

Kaiser was about to immediately rush over.

"Kaiser, do you want everyone present to die?" Linley's dark gold eyes stared at Kaiser. Kaiser instantly halted. He understood that Linley and Bebe definitely had the power to kill everyone present.

Even he, Kaiser, would only have the ability to flee. Facing a combined attack from both Linley and Bebe, he didn't have any chance of victory at all. "Ah..." Kaiser really didn't know what to do.

Linley looked back at Clayde.

Clayde's face was totally pale. Large beads of sweat the size of soybeans had gathered on his forehead. Right now, the amount of force Linley was exerting on him with his tail was very high.

"Continue thinking. The longer you think, the more pain you will be in." Linley's scale-covered claw reached out and grabbed Clayde's ear.

Guessing what Linley was about to do, Clayde howled, "No!"

"Riiip."

Clayde's left ear was ripped off by Linley, and he howled in agony while cursing wildly, "Linley, you bastard, you are a goddamn devil!"

"Keep on wasting time." Linley's claws slowly reached towards Clayde's face.

"This time, it'll be your eyes. Tell me, would you prefer your left eye, or your

right eye?" Linley's face was still expressionless. When Clayde looked at Linley, hoping to gather anything from Linley's eyes or facial expressions, all he could see was that unmoving, scale-covered face, and those cold, merciless dark gold eyes.

"If you don't decide, I'll decide for you. Just then, it was your left ear. Now, it will be your right eye." Linley reached out with his claws.

"No! I'll talk. I'll talk," Clayde howled with all his might.

Linley retracted his claws. "Then speak."

"I'll talk. I'll talk." Tears actually appeared in Clayde's eyes. He really had mentally collapsed. Linley had no intention of sparing him whatsoever. No matter what he did, he was going to die. If he talked, at least he would die an easy death. If he didn't, he would be tortured to death.

None of the Wildthunder knights standing off in the distance dared to say a word. Linley and Bebe, man and magical beast, were really too terrifying, too formidable.

Clayde was roaring furiously in his heart, "Radiant Church, this time you didn't give a damn about me and left me behind. Don't blame me for giving you an enemy which will be terrifying to deal with in the future!"

"Linley, I'll tell you. Each year, the Radiant Church will offer extremely pure souls to the Radiant Sovereign. The Radiant Sovereign needs only two things: The faith of worshippers, and pure souls," Clayde said directly.

Linley's stared at Clayde with his emotionless eyes. "What does this have to do with my mother?"

Clayde continued, "The purer the soul offered to the Radiant Sovereign, the greater the gifts the Radiant Sovereign will bestow upon the Church. That year... my younger brother Patterson and I had just stepped out of the Radiant Temple. When I saw your mother, I was instantly stunned. Her eyes looked so pure, so innocent. From that first glance I had of your mother, my mind was made up. I had the feeling that your mother's soul must be extremely pure." After having heard this, Linley could guess the rest.

"I could tell that your father was only an ordinary person, and thus I ordered

Patterson to go and directly abduct your mother. The next day, I delivered your mother to the Radiant Church.”

Clayde took a deep breath. “Indeed, your mother’s soul was incomparably pure. When the Radiant Church killed your mother, offering her soul as a sacrifice to the Radiant Sovereign, the Radiant Sovereign blessed them with greater gifts than they had ever received.”

“And this was the reason why the Radiant Temple decided to reward me with a divine blessing like none they had ever given before. The blessing raised me directly from a warrior of the seventh rank to the ninth rank. Although it would make my future advancement impossible, I was still satisfied. In addition, the Radiant Temple gifted me with a Saint-level Fateguard.”

Clayde looked at Linley. “Your mother’s soul really was very remarkable. The Radiant Temple actually gave me so many things for her. From this, you can imagine how heavily the Radiant Sovereign had rewarded them when they had sacrificed your mother’s soul to him.”

## Fate

Hearing Clayde's words, Linley fell silent.

"Haha, Linley, now you should know who your true enemy is, right? But are you capable of dealing with the Radiant Temple?" Clayde laughed wildly, on the edge of hysteria. Clayde knew that he was going to die, and at the moment of his death, he had decided to bring as much chaos to the world as he could.

"Do you speak the truth?" Linley's voice was hoarse.

Actually, Linley already believed what Clayde had just told him, precisely because this was the only possible explanation as to why the Radiant Church would have given Clayde a Saint-level Fateguard.

"You yourself know whether I speak truly or not." Clayde laughed wildly.

Linley fell silent.

"Linley, you should've considered the fact that you are a genius magus and a Dragonblood Warrior. In the eyes of the Radiant Church, you have much more potential than me, a warrior who was only raised to the ninth rank due to secret magical methods. In the future, you will most likely be both a Saint-level Supreme Warrior and a Saint-level Grand Magus. If it wasn't for this secret I just divulged, even if you had killed me, the Radiant Church probably wouldn't bear to execute you." Clayde laughed loudly.

Linley understood this reasoning.

"Clayde should be telling the truth," Doebling Cowart's voice sounded out in Linley's mind. Given Doebling Cowart's experience, his ability to judge whether someone was telling the truth or not was much better than Linley's.

Linley had deep faith in Doebling Cowart.



At this time, on Keyan Road within the City of Hess, there were six ruthless looking men dressed in violet robes. These six violet-robed men all naturally emitted the aura of cold, arrogant experts, causing everyone else around them to avoid them.

These six people were heading directly for Clayde's manor.

Right now, they had no idea as to what had happened at Clayde's manor.

"Waiters, are the Ascetics located here?" one of the violet-robed men said in a low voice.

The leader of the violet-robed men nodded. "Right. From what I understand, the Ascetics are all staying in this Clayde's manor. This assignment of ours is extremely important. It's best that we head out together alongside the Ascetics."

These six people were the six Special Executors of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal.

They had just arrived at Hess City, and this was the only address they had on hand. They didn't know that a few minutes ago, the Ascetics had all left. They had just barely missed them.

"Hrm? Why is there no one here?"

Upon entering Clayde's empty manor, they couldn't help but look around in confusion. The other five Special Executors looked at Waiters. Waiters was the leader of the squad for this assignment.

"Let's go inside and take a look," Waiters said calmly. The six headed directly into the manor, but the inside of the manor was totally devoid of people as well.

"Linley, release my royal father. My royal father has already told you everything," a voice rang out from beyond the back gate. Instantly, the six Special Executors turned to look at the back courtyard.

The six men's faces turned solemn.

"Linley?"

The six men exchanged glances.

“Linley? His name is on the Red List. Kill on sight.” The six Special Executors immediately hurried towards the back gate.

The Ecclesiastical Tribunal had two special lists. One was known as the Red List. The other was the Black List.

The people on the Red List were to be killed on sight, but there was no need to expend too much effort on those targets. Those on the Black List were to be killed no matter the cost.

Actually, given Linley’s future potential, the threat he could pose towards the Radiant Church in the future should’ve been enough for him to be placed on the Black List. However, while the high levels of the Radiant Church were fleeing, they believed that since Linley was not a member of the Church, the chances of him being able to discover that his mother had been killed by the Radiant Church was very low. Thus, they only placed Linley on the Red List.

The Special Executors of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal all possessed astonishing power. These six Special Executors were all warriors of the ninth rank. They stealthily began to surround Linley.



\*

In the little alleyway behind the back gate of Clayde’s manor.

Linley’s iron-whip-like draconic tail was still wrapped tightly around Clayde.

“Release your royal father?” Linley stared at Shaq. Letting out a cold laugh, he said, “I can release your father, but what of my mother and father? Although it was the Radiant Church that killed my mother, at least half of the responsibility lies with your father. And over half the responsibility for my father’s death lies on your father as well.”

As Linley spoke, he began to exert more pressure with his tail.

“Crack, crack.” All sorts of strange noises were emitting from Clayde’s body. Clayde was in such agony from the constricting draconic tail that he began to



try and struggle again.

“Ah! Ah! Linley, kill me cleanly in one stroke!” Clayde moaned in agony.

“Crunch.”

Clayde’s two arms snapped off. Right now, Clayde had been constricted so tightly by Linley that his formerly broad waist was now more slender than a woman’s.

“Die.”

Linley looked at Clayde, then exert a bit more force with his tail.

“Smush!” Clayde spat out a large amount of blood from his mouth, and his entire face turned red. While spitting the blood out, he was coughing nonstop, and some bits and pieces of his internal organs were coughed out as well.

Right now...

Clayde had been ripped into two parts at the waist. Even his spine had been snapped apart. The only thing keeping his upper body and lower body connected was a bloody layer of skin.

Clayde let out a few more moans. “Ah... ah...” His entire face was red. A few seconds later, his breathing stopped, and his soul left this earth.

But right now, Linley didn’t feel any happiness or sense of accomplishment.

The only thing he felt was a deep grief, a deep sadness.

“Father. Mother. Can you see me?” Linley said to himself.

Shaq, Kaiser, the princess, and the Wildthunder knights all stared at Linley. Many of them had hearts full of fear. After seeing how Clayde had died, they didn’t dare to try and avenge him. They could only hope that Linley would leave now.

Linley’s dark gold eyes glanced at everyone present.

“Cough.” Shaq cleared his throat, beads of sweat appearing on his forehead. His father had died, but he didn’t want to die as well.

Linley’s draconic tail swayed slightly, then he turned and began to walk away.

“Bebe. Let’s go,” he called to Bebe.

Just as Bebe, who was off to the side this entire time, was about to scurry away with him, Bebe suddenly paused, all the hair on his body sticking up. Right afterwards, Linley as well sensed sudden danger, which seemed to come from all directions.

“Whoosh.”

Several gusts of wind could be heard as six violet-robed figures appeared, surrounding Linley from six different points. Linley and Bebe were both trapped within their encirclement. Four of these six were standing on nearby rooftops, while the other two were at each end of the alley Linley was in. There was no place Linley could flee to at all.

“Special Executors from the Ecclesiastical Tribunal.” Linley immediately understood who these people were upon seeing their uniform.

Seeing this formation, Shaq and the Wildthunder knights all turned pale. These six Special Executors hadn’t just encircled Linley and Bebe. They had also encircled Shaq and his men as well.

“Milords, I am the Second Prince of the royal clan of Fenlai. Please allow me to leave first,” Shaq immediately begged.

Kaiser recognized the Special Executors from their outfit. He also immediately said, “Milord Special Executors, I am Kaiser, and I am also a servant of the Radiant Church. May I leave first?” Kaiser knew very well about some of the special methods available to the Special Executors of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal. Given the current situation, he, Kaiser, wouldn’t be of any use to them, and would actually serve to disrupt their actions.”

“Kaiser, you can leave.”

One of the violet-robed men standing at one of the ends of the alley said in a cold voice.

“Yes.” Kaiser immediately began running towards one of the ends of the alleyway. The six violet-robed men didn’t block him at all, allowing him to flee past them. Kaiser was an expert of the Kingdom of Fenlai, true, but he was also a holy knight of the Radiant Church.

“Milords, what about me?” Shaq immediately said.

“Milord Special Executors,” that princess immediately begged the Special Executors as well.

But the six Special Executors didn’t even glance at them. The six Special Executors were clear-headed. When Kaiser left, he was but one person, and a warrior of the ninth rank at that. Linley definitely wouldn’t be able to find a chance to slip past. But if they allowed Shaq and the others to leave as well, given Linley’s current prowess, he definitely might be able to find a way to slip past at a critical moment.

Linley stared coldly at the six of them.

“You want to kill me?” Linley said calmly. He felt total confidence in himself. Even when surrounded by the attacks of that group of giant dragons, he was still able to flee and survive.

To these six Special Executors, killing him and Bebe wouldn’t be an easy affair. The protective scales on Linley’s body were no joking matter.

“Those on the Red List are to be killed on sight.” The leader of the Special Executors laughed coldly.

The six Special Executors stared fixedly at him and Bebe, ignoring everything else entirely. As high-level members of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal, they naturally knew that Linley was a Dragonblood Warrior. Dragonblood Warriors were one of the Supreme Warriors. They didn’t dare to look down upon him.

“Oh? Kill on sight?” Linley’s draconic tail began to swing.

“Swish!” Like a steel sabre, Linley’s draconic tail casually slashed across the ground, cutting a deep gouge into it. Linley’s dark gold eyes were fixed on this group of people as well.

“Milord Special Executors.” Shaq and his men were really terrified now.

“Let’s go!” One of the Wildthunder knights let out a deep roar, and immediately, a group of knights charged en masse towards one of the alleyway exits. The remaining Wildthunder knights numbered amongst them more than ten knights of the eighth rank. For them to charge en masse like this, even a

combatant of the ninth rank would find it difficult to stop them.

Linley's eyes lit up.

Linley immediately charged towards the wall on his left. Ignoring the wall's existence, Linley slammed into it as though he were a large magical beast.

"BAM!" Linley knocked the section of wall over while fleeing at high speed to the north.

"Whoosh."

The bodies of those six Special Executors suddenly began to emit a hot, burning white light. The light from these six Special Executors was totally interconnected, forming a strange, glowing hexagram.

Linley just happened to ram against one of the edges of the hexagram.

"Bam!"

Linley felt as though he had just been slapped by a Violet Tattooed Bear. His entire body quivered as he was sent flying backwards. He remained surrounded by the six Special Executors.

"Ah!!!"

The bodies of those Wildthunder knights who struck against the glowing white hexagram all exploded, drenching the area with blood. Every single one of the Wildthunder knights who had touched the glowing white hexagram died.

"What is this?" Linley was shocked.

"Linley, quick, do your best to escape! This should be one of the combination attack methods of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal." Doehring Cowart immediately recognized the danger that Linley and Bebe were now in. If they continued to be trapped in such a manner, it was very likely that Linley and Bebe would not be able to escape at all.

Those six Special Executors charged forwards towards Linley and Bebe in a very practiced manner. And as they did, the area of movement within the hexagram began to shrink at an extremely fast rate.

"Ah!" "Ah!" "Ah!" "Ah!"

Shaq and the remaining knights who had not touched the glowing white hexagram were unable to dodge with the six Special Executors drawing closer and closer. One after another was forced to come into contact with the glowing white hexagram, and when they did, their bodies began to vibrate before exploding.

In the blink of an eye, no one in Shaq's party was left alive.

But Linley and Bebe were trapped in an increasingly small, tight space.

"Boss, that white thing seems really powerful. What should we do?" Bebe was frantic.

Linley had both felt and could sense the power of this glowing white hexagram. When it had struck his body, he still felt extreme pain despite his defensive powers, and all the blood in his body had been agitated.

"Bebe, you go down through the earth, I'll go up from the skies. Flee!" Linley mentally directed Bebe.

This black-scaled aberration, Linley, and his freak of a Shadowmouse companion, Bebe, acted at almost the same time. One flew up into the sky like an arrow leaving the bow, while the other burrowed deep into the ground.

## Passing Away

“Haaah!” The six Special Executors simultaneously stomped the ground viciously, and suddenly the light around them penetrated the earth. Bebe, who had just burrowed into the earth, struck against the white light and was immediately knocked back.

“Whoosh!”

At the same time, the six Special Executors retreated at high speed, suddenly expanding the area within the glowing white hexagram. With each leap, Linley was usually only able to travel a few dozen meters to a hundred meters at most. In the end, he still had to fall to the ground after all.

As for the Soaring Technique...

Under the current conditions, he simply didn't have enough time to utter the incantations necessary to cast the Soaring Technique.

“Haaaaah!” Bebe didn't dare to touch the glowing white hexagram the six Special Executors had created again. Bebe jumped up in the air as well. At this time, five of the Special Executors suddenly rose into the air as well. Of those five, four rose to the same height in the air as Linley, while the last one rose above Linley.

“Whoa!” One person was above him, four were around him, and one was underneath him.

Glowing with white light, the six Special Executors had formed a totally airtight octahedron, keeping Linley and Bebe totally sealed in within.

“What the hell is this?” Linley was rather stunned.

Doehring Cowart's voice sounded out in Linley's mind. “This special combination attack of these Special Executors of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal consumes an enormous amount of light-style battle-qi. But perhaps they have

some secret treasures of the Radiant Temple on them. Five thousand years ago, the Radiant Temple didn't possess such mysterious, agile combination attacks.

Even if they practiced the same type of battle-qi, every person's battle-qi would have fine, minute differences. To be able to totally combine battle-qi like these six Special Executors were doing, to the point of even being able to transform their battle-qi to dramatically increase its power was virtually impossible. But the Radiant Temple had succeeded.

"Whoosh."

Above, below, front and back, left and right. These six Special Executors flew towards Linley simultaneously at high speed. All six of them were wielding very thin, slender longswords.

No place to dodge!

"Boss." Bebe was frantic. Linley mentally roared, "Bebe, let's go all out against the one below us. If we can kill one of them, this formation will be broken."

"Got it."

Linley and Bebe, man and magical beast, began to fall at high speeds, launching simultaneous attacks against the combatant of the ninth rank beneath them. But the combatant of the ninth rank didn't seem to be afraid at all. On the contrary, his lips quirked up slightly, a hint of disdain and mockery on his face.

"Thruuum."

The white light flowed at high speeds. The light dimmed from the other five Special Executors, while the light from the one below began to blaze like the sun. Launching off from the ground, this Special Executor chopped towards Linley and Bebe with his sword.

"Ah!" Ignoring everything else, Linley struck out with his draconic tail, risking everything to try and constrict the Special Executor.

"Slash!" The sword chopped against Linley's chest. Linley only felt an incomparable degree of pain, and his protective scales instantly began to crack. It felt as though an iron rod that had been heated until it was glowing white had

been pressed against his skin, causing such pain that Linley's entire body began to twitch, but he continued to constrict the Special Executor with his draconic tail. Fresh blood began to flow from Linley's wound.

The scales of the Armored Razorback Wyrms weren't able to block this sword.

"That sword blow's power was only a bit weaker than the power of a Saint-level expert." Doebling Cowart was astonished as well. After entering their combination attack formation, the attacks of the Special Executors could reach an incredible level of power.

The Radiant Temple was confident that unless the opponent was a Saint-level combatant, this formation attack would always be victorious!

"Ah!" The draconic tail gripping the Special Executor suddenly came under assault by that powerful light-style battle-qi. Linley felt enormous pain coming from his tail, but Linley continued to go all out, risking everything to constrict this opponent. Those dark golden eyes stared fixedly at the Special Executor.

"Hmph." The Special Executor let out a cold laugh.

"Bam."

White light exploded forth from the Special Executor, and Linley's draconic tail uncontrollably slackened. Linley's constrictive power simply wasn't able to overcome the opponent's counterattack.

At this time, the other five Special Executors came charging at Linley as well.

"Boss!" Bebe kicked off from Linley's shoulders, charging directly towards those five Special Executors. But on his very first attack, Bebe was struck simultaneously by all five swords, and his body was knocked back downwards.

"Bebe!" Linley said worriedly.

"Boss, I'm fine." Bebe flipped to his feet, but a hint of blood could be seen on his firm, tough fur. However, Bebe's defense really was remarkably powerful. He barely suffered any damage to his skin and fur.

These six Special Executors stared at Bebe in astonishment.

Too monstrous. Even that hadn't been able to pierce the skin of this Shadowmouse? As far as the Special Executors were concerned, even magical



beasts of the ninth rank should have their defensive armor and skin be pierced by that blow.

Even someone with defense as monstrously powerful as Linley saw the scales over his chest crack and split from a single blow.

“The target is Linley!” The six of them knew that killing this monster of a Shadowmouse would probably force them to use quite some effort, but killing Linley would be much easier.

A single sword had been able to penetrate his defenses. Thus, a few sword strikes should be enough to kill him.

“What on earth is going on?! Their light-style battle-qi seems to be limitless!” Linley mentally roared with fury, as he swept his claws to attack the Special Executors who were charging towards him.

“Shkreeeee!” Bebe’s piercing screech rang out as well.

Light wrapped around their bodies, the six Special Executors did a pincer attack against Linley and Bebe, while Linley and Bebe used all their force to try and counterattack.

“BAM!!!”

A wild series of attacks. Both sides totally ignored their defense, only focusing on attacking.

The six Special Executors retreated at high speed.

More than half of Linley’s black scales were shattered now, revealing multiple wounds beneath. Fresh blood oozed out past the scales, and even the scales on Linley’s tail were shattered.

Linley wasn’t able to suppress the fresh blood which had risen to his throat, and he vomited it out.

“Their defense...” Linley was truly angry and frantic now.

He had finally met people whose defensive powers were even greater than his own. These six Special Executors were using light-style battle-qi in an extravagantly wasteful manner. Their combination formation attacks gave them both terrifying offense as well as astonishing defense. Linley’s attack hadn’t

managed to wound them at all.

“Boss, are you okay?” Bebe said in shock and fright. Those beady eyes of him stared at Linley with concern.

Bebe was in much better shape than Linley. The primary target of those six Special Executors had been Linley. In addition, Bebe’s defense was even more monstrous than Linley’s. Once again, only a hint of blood could be seen on Bebe’s fur.

“Fi-fine.” Linley wiped the blood from his mouth.

“That was the first attack.”

One of the violet-robed Special Executors standing on a distant rooftop said calmly, “Your defense isn’t bad. Let’s see how many of our formation attacks you can take.”

“Waiters, let’s not waste time,” one of the other Special Executors also standing on a rooftop said coldly.

“Move,” the Special Executor shouted in a loud voice.

Many of the buildings nearby had toppled, and the battle aroused the interest of a large number of powerful combatants, who were watching from afar. But seeing such a large scale, intense battle, they didn’t dare draw too near.

The aura of that powerful light-style battle-qi alone filled them with dread.

“Swish!” The six Special Executors moved at the same time, transforming into six streaks of white light that flew towards Linley. Surrounded on all sides by the walls of light, Linley had nowhere to run.

Linley ground his teeth.

“Raaaaaargh!” Linley let out an angry howl, then pulled out the adamantine heavy sword from his back, wildly chopping it towards the six Special Executors.

“BOOM.” Linley’s adamantine heavy sword collided viciously against a Special Executor, who didn’t even attempt to dodge. That Special Executor suddenly felt a terrifying force passing towards him.

“Hrm?” The violet-robed Special Executor was knocked flying backwards by

the blow, but under the protection of that light-style battle-qi, he still didn't suffer any major injuries.

Only a heavy sword such as this could allow the astonishing power of a Dragonblood Warrior to be put on full display.

"Slash!"

The other five swords continued to chop at Linley's body. Linley used his claws, his tail, and the spikes on his body to wildly attack, and the five Special Executors once more flew backwards.

Linley fell to one knee.

The majority of the scales on Linley's body were shattered now, and that wound on his chest had suffered yet another slash. The wound was so deep that Linley's bones could be seen, and it was rapidly oozing blood.

However, the Dragonblood Warrior's powerful bloodline gave Linley an extremely fast recovery.

Linley's muscles were constantly rippling and stretching out, try to once more mend and stitch themselves back together. This wound, however, was simply too severe. Even Linley's bloodline only resulted in the wound growing stronger. The loss of a large amount of blood, however, was causing Linley to grow dizzy.

"The next one will be the one that kills you," one of the six Special Executors said arrogantly.

Filled with fear, Bebe crouched next to Linley. Both Linley and Bebe felt a sense of despair.

"Hmph." Linley angrily shook his head, forcing himself to try and focus a little.

But he had lost too much blood, and even Linley's vision had grown slightly blurred. But right at this moment, a magical, illusory ray of light shone forth from the Coiling Dragon ring, transforming into an old man with white robes, a white beard, and white hair.

"Grandpa Doehring." Linley was startled. He didn't understand why Doehring Cowart had appeared all of a sudden.

Doehring Cowart looked exactly the way he did when Linley had first

encountered him. A little smile on his face, Doehring Cowart gently rubbed Linley on the head.

“Linley, in the future, you’ll have to rely on yourself,” Doehring Cowart said, a fond smile on his face.

“Grandpa Doehring, what are you...” Linley was stunned.

Doehring Cowart’s spirit suddenly rose into the air. Hovering a meter above the ground, he spread his hands wide. A terrifyingly powerful burst of spiritual energy suddenly erupted forth from Doehring Cowart.

Right now, Doehring Cowart felt extremely calm and at peace.

“In the past, when I lived in the Pouant Empire, my life was a life of training and slaughter. In the Pouant Empire, I was extremely arrogant and a difficult person to get close to. I had no children and no grandchildren. But after having spent five thousand years in the Coiling Dragon ring, my temperament has changed. And then, I met you, Linley.”

Hovering in the air, Doehring Cowart was still gazing at Linley.

“Grandpa Doehring, what are you going to do?” Linley had a terrible premonition...

“I’ve watched you grow up and mature, one step at a time. In my heart, I felt very proud of your successes. I’ve even come to consider you as my own grandson.” The amount of spiritual energy Doehring Cowart was emitting grew even greater.

The amount of spiritual energy was so high that aside from powerful combatants such as Linley and the six Special Executors, even those warriors watching the battle from far away could sense it. All of the six Special Executors were shocked and alarmed.

“Linley, don’t be sad. In truth, trapped as I am within this Coiling Dragon ring, I don’t have much of a future. Let this, then, be one final demonstration of my power.” Doehring Cowart’s smile became all the more brilliant.

But Linley was now shaking with terror.

“What is going on?!” The six Special Executors were beginning to be genuinely

frightened. That vortex of spiritual energy was simply too powerful, so powerful that they too were beginning to quake with fear.

The power unleashed when a peak-stage Saint-level combatant was igniting the spiritual energy present in his very soul was incomparably more powerful than the power which even a peak-stage Saint-level combatant normally possessed.

“WHOOSH!” All of the earth elemental essence around the entire City of Hess suddenly flowed towards Doehring Cowart at high speed. Bound by Doehring Cowart’s terrifyingly powerful spiritual energy, all of the earth elemental essence began to coalesce.

No mageforce. This was a spell that relied solely on spiritual energy to control the earth elemental essence!

Under normal conditions, this would render the attack power of the earth spell to be very weak. But the spell that Doehring Cowart was now casting was so powerful that one could only shiver in terror.

“HEAVENLY METEOR’S DESCENT!”

Doehring Cowart’s spirit had begun to grow blurry, but his voice remained as cold and calm as that of a celestial spirit. Six enormous earth-colored meteors fell forth from the sky, smashing towards those six Special Executors.

“SWOOSH!” Those six gigantic meteors formed purely from earth elemental essence, each the size of a house, smashed towards the six men at such a high speed that it seemed as though they were tearing through space itself.

Those six Special Executors fled in terror, but those six meteors only chased after them.

“Linley.” Doehring Cowart looked at Linley. “Goodbye.”

Linley looked up at Grandpa Doehring, with his white beard, white hair, and white robe.

“Remember this. Live well.” Doehring Cowart’s face suddenly blossomed into his trademark smile... and then his now-translucent spirit disappeared, like smoke being blown away by the wind.

Linley opened his mouth, but felt as though no words could come from his throat. His tears began to uncontrollably roll down his face.

“Ah... Ah!!!” As though he were mute and incapable of speech, Linley howled to the heavens, and his tears came pouring down.

Crazed

BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM!



\*

The six giant meteors smashed down viciously towards those six Special Executors. The six Special Executors all used their hands to rip the ground apart beneath them and try to tunnel downwards.

Those six giant meteors struck the ground, causing the earth to shake furiously with colossal booms, as though giant waves of thunder were suddenly emanating from the ground.

“BOOOOOM!”

Six massive, deep gouges appeared in the earth, each of them around ten meters wide. The tremendous shockwaves spread out in all directions, and the earth itself began to buckle and roil about, toppling houses and snapping trees in every which way.

Within a circular area with a circumference of several hundred meters, everything was turned to dust.

This terrifying explosive boom caused the entirety of Hess City to take notice. Whether it was the Ascetics who had just stepped out of the gates of Hess City, or the men of the Dawson Conglomerate, or other powerful experts, everyone felt the vibrations coming from this place.



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The roiling waves of force reached Linley as well, but Linley only stood there

like an idiot, not moving at all. He allowed the waves of force to buffet him as they pleased.

Linley just stood there like an idiot, his tears flowing down without stopping.

“Ah... ah... ah...” Linley seemed to have forgotten how to speak, and his entire body trembled with panic and heartbreak as he roared into the sky.

Linley fell to his knees.

A sense of utter heartbreak, of his heart being ripped to shreds, consumed Linley.

Linley’s mind suddenly began to swim with images of him and Doehring Cowart together.



\*

That first time he had seen that ray of light transform into an old man with white robes, white beard, and white hair. The child-Linley had shouted in astonishment, “You... who are you?”

“Hello, kiddo. My name is Doehring Cowart. I am a Saint-level Grand Magus of the Pouant Empire!” That was the first time Doehring Cowart had interacted with Linley.



\*

“Grandpa Doehring, why aren’t you talking? How is the strength of my affinity for earth elemental essence?” The first time Linley had been tested for his talent as a magus.

“Good. Extremely good. Your affinity for earth elemental essence is extremely high.” Doehring Cowart’s face was wreathed in smiles. “Based on what I know, only perhaps one in a thousand magi would have as strong an affinity for earth elemental essence as you. Truly.” Doehring Cowart’s praise had caused child-Linley to be unspeakably excited.





\*

A Saint-level Grand Magus of the era of the Pouant Empire. A young child. And so, under the tutelage of this Grand Magus of the Pouant Empire, the child embarked on the road to being a magus.



\*

Stone sculpting using the Straight Chisel School method. Training within the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts. Under the tutelage of the experienced Doebling Cowart, Linley had progressed and matured at an astonishing rate.

But when Linley had become the center of attention for everyone...

... no one knew that behind him stood the spirit of a Saint-level Grand Magus of the era of the Pouant Empire.



\*

“Linley. In the future, you’ll have to rely on yourself.” Grandpa Doebling had fondly rubbed Linley’s head one last time.

After casting that world-shaking forbidden spell, ‘Heavenly Meteor’s Descent’, Grandpa Doebling had faded away.

“Linley. Goodbye.”

“Remember this. Live well.”



\*

Linley’s mind swam with images of the time he had spent with his Grandpa Doebling. That kindly, forbearing old man who had taught Linley so much, had long since become someone whom Linley couldn’t bear to be apart from.

“No...no...”

Linley shook his head repeatedly.

He wasn't willing to believe it. Grandpa Doehring had truly passed away. What's more, his very soul had dissipated upon his death.

“Impossible. Grandpa Doehring, come out. Come out.” Linley stared at the Coiling Dragon ring, howling nonstop at first, before his words took on begging tones as his tears splashed against his ice-cold scales.

Blood continued to leak out of Linley's body, but Linley didn't feel anything at all.

“Grandpa Doehring.”

Linley so dearly hoped that once more, that ray of white light would shine forth from the Coiling Dragon ring and transform into the white bearded, white-haired, white-robed Grandpa Doehring. Linley simply couldn't believe that Grandpa Doehring had died, just like that. Never to be by his side again.

He had been together with Grandpa Doehring since he was a child.

Since then, Linley had never been separated from Grandpa Doehring. Never!

In the depths of his heart, Linley had truly become accustomed long ago to Grandpa Doehring's presence. Even when Linley had been imprisoned within the Radiant Temple, he hadn't felt as alone or as helpless as he did now.

His heart had always been steady... because behind him, he had the support of Grandpa Doehring.

But now...

Grandpa Doehring had left forever. Forever!

“Why... Why?” Linley's voice was shaking. “Heaven, first my mother died, then my father died. Why? Why did you have to take even Grandpa Doehring away as well?”

“WHY!!!” Linley raised his head, howling towards the heavens.

His voice echoed in the sky.

“Ah... ah...” Linley fell to his knees, powerless. He began to sob madly, but no

matter how hard Linley cried, that kindly old man would never appear again.

He had died and left forever.

“Grandpa Doebling.”

Linley felt more feeble and fragile than he ever had before. It was a spiritual fragility. No father. No mother. And now, even Grandpa Doebling, who had always been by his side, had left.

The only one left by Linley’s side was Bebe, who had never even known about Grandpa Doebling’s existence.

“Boss. Hey, Linley, Boss!” Bebe nudged Linley, somewhat frightened.

Linley turned his head to look at Bebe.

“Bebe.” Linley suddenly pulled Bebe into his arms.

“Boss, just now, you were calling out for a ‘Grandpa Doebling’. Who is Grandpa Doebling? Just now, I sensed a terrifying spiritual energy burst. What was that?” Bebe was totally baffled.

Linley’s heart was shot through with agony once more upon hearing Grandpa Doebling’s name.

He lowered his head to look at the Coiling Dragon ring on his finger. But... Grandpa Doebling would never come out from it again.

“Rustle.” Suddenly, a series of extremely light sounds could be heard. Linley turned his head to look.

Within the giant craters created by the meteors, a violet-robed figure was struggling to crawl out. Not only him. The other five men were also slowly struggling to crawl out as well.

Heavenly Meteor’s Descent – An earth-style forbidden spell.

If a Saint-level Grand Magus were to use this spell, the six of them would have been dead without a doubt. But Doebling Cowart was a Saint-level Grand Magus who didn’t have a single shred of mageforce.

Based on the laws of magic, mageforce was the general commanding the army of soldiers known as elemental essence. Through mageforce, spiritual

energy was able to command these soldiers to form powerful magical spells.

What Doehring Cowart had done was to consume the spiritual energy within his very soul, using this powerful burst of spiritual energy to directly control the elemental essences and execute the forbidden spell, Heavenly Meteor's Descent.

But because he had no mageforce, even though he consumed all of his own spiritual energy, the power of Doehring Cowart's spell was only 10% - 20% of a normal Heavenly Meteor's Descent. Despite that though, even 10% to 20% of the power of a forbidden spell had smashed those six Special Executors to the brink of death.

Watching those six violet-robed figures crawl out, Linley's heart was suddenly filled with unbridled, boundless, unquenchable rage.

"Ah!!!!!" With a scream, Linley charged like a bolt of lightning towards one of the violet-robed figures. The Special Executor, seeing Linley charge towards him, was so terrified that his eyes turned as round as the moon.

"Ah!!!!!" Exerting force with his arms, Linley ripped the Special Executor into two halves with his bare hands.

"Die." Linley physically ripped off the head of another Special Executor.

"Haaaargh!" Linley's sharp claws pierced into the chest of a third Special Executor, ripping his heart out and crushing it to pieces with his claws.

"Go die!" Linley latched onto the throat of the fourth Special Executor with his teeth, ripping his throat out.

He wanted to eat their flesh and drink their blood!

"Ah!!!!" Linley's figure suddenly appeared next to the fifth Special Executor. The heavily wounded Special Executor, unable to defend himself, could only watch in terror as Linley ripped him apart into two pieces by his legs.

As for the sixth Special Executor...

"You... you..." The heavily wounded sixth Special Executor, upon seeing the terrifying scene before him, saw Linley charge towards him like a demon from the Infernal Realm. He was so terrified that his body began to shake, and then

he collapsed dead from fear.

Although the sixth Special Executor was already dead, Linley still smashed a vicious punch at his head, exploding it.

Watching this, Bebe was somewhat frightened.

The warriors watching from far away had been scared stupid as well. They had never imagined that a human could be so vicious, so brutal, so terrifying. This was especially true because of how Linley currently appeared. His body was covered in broken scales, and blood dyed his entire form red. Even his dark gold eyes were dimly flashing red.

“Boss, you... you... what’s wrong?” Bebe was worried.

After Linley had brutally killed all six Special Executors, he suddenly sat down on the ground, his energy gone. He sat there, staring into nothing, with no clue as to what he was thinking.

“Boss.” Bebe pushed Linley frantically.

Linley suddenly raised his head, but he was unable to restrain his tears from coming out again. He then lowered his head, burying it against his legs and beginning to cry once more.



\*

Those six giant meteors had turned the entire area around for hundreds of meters into rubble. Those six violet-robed men had all been killed by that demonic freak.

But then, that demonic freak suddenly put his head against his legs and began to sob.



\*

There were nearly ten thousand onlookers now, watching from hundreds of meters away. None of these people could understand what they were seeing.

“That demon is crying?”

All of them were astonished.

“That demon seems... seems really sad,” a young person said uncertainly to a nearby friend of his. That friend started, then nodded slowly.

None of the onlookers moved any closer. They had seen the terrifying scene of just moments ago. Even the combatants of the eighth rank knew exactly how much stronger this person in front of them was.

“The demon is crying?” Yale, George, and Reynolds had just gotten here, having travelled quite far. Hearing these words, they all started.

“Out of the way! Out of the way!” Yale shouted angrily.

Immediately, the guards of the Dawson Conglomerate began to push aside the various onlookers. Yale, George, and Reynolds ran frantically towards the center of the battlefield.

But upon reaching the epicenter, all of them were stunned.

Everything within several hundred meters had been turned to rubble. Looking at the six craters, one could imagine how terrifyingly powerful those six giant meteors had been. And just looking at the corpses of those six men, one could imagine how brutal the person who had killed them was.

The demon’s body, covered with broken scales, was sitting there, sobbing.

Upon seeing Bebe by the side of the ‘demon’, and that adamantine heavy sword which had been tossed to the ground, Yale and the others became all the more certain that this was Linley.

“Third Bro.” Yale, George, and Reynolds immediately rushed over.

By now, Monroe Dawson had arrived as well. He immediately ordered his subordinates, “Quick, dispose of those six corpses, then leave immediately. Don’t let anyone know that the Dawson Conglomerate had anything to do with this.” As he spoke, Monroe Dawson immediately left as well.

“Third Bro,” Yale, George, and Reynolds all called out with worry.

Back during Linley’s assassination attempt on Clayde at Fenlai City, Yale had

already guessed that Linley was capable of transforming into a Dragonblood Warrior. He had informed Reynolds and George as well. And now, seeing Bebe as well as the discarded adamantine heavy sword, they naturally were certain that this was Linley.

Linley's body shook slightly.

Raising his head and glancing besides himself, Linley saw Yale, George, and Reynolds. Linley finally spoke. "You guys..."

"Let's go, quick," Yale urged immediately. "You just killed Special Executors. If the Radiant Church finds out, it'll be a disaster for you." Yale immediately helped Linley up.

Linley allowed himself to be raised to his feet.

"Bebe. Let's go." Linley hugged Bebe, then headed out.

Yale was startled, because he noticed that Linley didn't pay any attention at all to his adamantine heavy sword. He couldn't help but call out urgently, "Third Bro, your heavy sword."

"Heavy sword?" Linley turned his head. After a moment, he seemed to understand, and he walked over, picking his heavy sword up.

Just then, the subordinates of the Dawson Conglomerate arrived as well, and they quickly disposed of those six violet-robed Special Executors' corpses.

"What's wrong with Third Bro?" George said quietly to Yale and Reynolds.

Yale shook his head as well, confused. "No idea. Bebe seems to be fine as well. Why then does it seem as though Third Bro just suffered a worse blow than that time when he had his heart broken? He seems so downcast that it is like he has lost his soul."

Linley allowed the Dawson Conglomerate's men to lead him away, as they crept away via small alleyways and arrived at a mysterious residence.

## Stillness

Within the dark, quiet residence, there was only Reynolds, Yale, George, a few dozen female attendants, and a few dozen guards. All of them were here for Linley.

Beneath branches of hanging grapes, George, Yale, and Reynolds were standing around a stone desk.

“Boss Yale. What do you think is going on with Third Bro?” Reynolds face was filled with confusion as he said helplessly.

Yale shook his head. “I don’t know either. It’s been ten days since Third Bro has come here, and in these past ten days, Third Bro hasn’t had any of his usual energy. He isn’t even training, nor does he joke around and laugh with us anymore. He’s always off by himself.”

George nodded as well. “In the past, no matter what happened, Third Bro wouldn’t stop his training. But now he seems to have transformed into a totally different person.”

“So who can tell me what exactly is going on with Third Bro?” Reynolds gnashed his teeth.

“It would be great if I knew.” Yale sighed resignedly.

The thing which hurt their heads the most was that they had no idea what had caused Linley to become like this. He no longer trained, nor did he joke around with the three of them. He was always off by himself, looking as though he had lost his soul.

He had become like this for no apparent reason whatsoever.

As the dear bros of Linley, how could they not be worried?

“Third Bro must have suffered some sort of tremendous shock.” Yale sighed quietly. George and Reynolds were all startled for a moment, then they fell



silent. They couldn't help but think back to what they had seen that day.

Thousands of observers surrounding a circular area where everything for hundreds of meters around had been reduced to rubble. Within that disaster area, those six astonishingly deep craters and fallen meteors.

Linley, in full Dragonform, had brutally massacred those six Special Executors, then sat down and began to cry. He had been sobbing like a child. "I've never seen Third Bro this heartbroken, this fragile," Yale said in a low voice.

George nodded as well. "Third Bro is very tough. Even when he suffered heartbreak from breaking up with Alice, after completing the 'Awakening From the Dream' sculpture, he headed directly for the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts to engage in more training."

"Right. Even when his father died, Third Bro had managed to endure and hold on. But this time..." Reynolds simply couldn't understand.

They were all certain that their beloved bro was in a fragile state right now, but none of them could find a reason why.

Next to a murmuring creek in the back courtyard of the residence, Linley was sitting on top of a decorative polished stone. He stared at the creek, not moving.

Bebe was standing on the stone as well, right next to Linley.

Utter silence. The only sound that could be heard was the murmurs of the flowing water.

Although Linley's eyes were aimed at the creek, his thoughts were still with Grandpa Doehring and the time they had spent together.

How he had played around with Grandpa Doehring as a child.

How Grandpa Doehring had strictly supervised and trained him as a young man.

In the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, how Grandpa Doehring had lectured him time and time again to be careful without growing tired of it.

With each memory swimming to the surface, Linley felt his heart grow still.

“After my father died, I thought that I was now very lonely. But I didn’t realize that in reality, I was very fortunate. No matter what happened, Grandpa Doebling was always behind me, supporting me, consoling me, encouraging me, reminding me...”

“But why didn’t I realize this in the past? Why didn’t I treasure the time I had spent together with Grandpa Doebling?” Linley’s heart was filled with agony.

Grandpa Doebling had never made any excessive requests of him, but he had never considered about how Grandpa Doebling had felt. He hadn’t truly valued the time he had spent with Grandpa Doebling. Perhaps subconsciously, he had believed that Grandpa Doebling would forever be with him within the Coiling Dragon ring.

“Coiling Dragon ring? Grandpa Doebling was always inside the Coiling Dragon ring by himself. It must have been very painful and miserable for him to always be alone in there. Grandpa Doebling probably also hoped that I would chat with him often, right?” Only now did Linley think of these things.

But...

In the past, Linley usually would only ask for Grandpa Doebling’s advice when he met with some insurmountable difficulties. He would very rarely actively seek out Grandpa Doebling just to chat.

He only took, without giving back.

“Why is it that only after I have lost, that I now understand how to cherish?” Linley’s body began to tremble. How he hoped that Grandpa Doebling would return and would be by his side again.

Unfortunately...

This was impossible.

Grandpa Doebling was dead. Dead and gone forever.

Linley could feel his heart clenching, as though it were contorting. His entire body was convulsing with pain. But there wasn’t a hint of pain on Linley’s face.

Deep in Linley’s heart, he even began to think...

If he could just die now from the pain, then he would have escaped from it all.

“Boss,” Bebe’s voice rang out in Linley’s head. Linley turned to look at Bebe. Bebe’s beady little black eyes were staring at Linley, a look of concern in them.

“You... you are thinking about that Grandpa Doehring again?” Even Bebe only learned after Doehring Cowart’s death that Linley previously had a ghost Saint-level Grand Magus by his side.

Linley nodded.

Bebe mentally spoke to Linley. “Boss, can you... can you tell me all about that Grandpa Doehring?”

Looking at Bebe, Linley nodded slightly, then reached out and held Bebe in his arms, hugging him. He began to tell Bebe all about Doehring Cowart. “That year, I was eight years old. There were two Saint-level combatants who had appeared at the town of Wushan...”

Standing outside the gate to the back courtyard, Reynolds and the others quietly watched as Linley hugged Bebe while seated on that smooth, polished decorative stone.

“I feel extremely miserable myself, seeing Third Bro like this.” Reynolds sighed softly.

Yale and George were both silent.

“We have to think of something.” George’s eyes suddenly sharpened, became fierce. “No matter what, we can’t let Third Bro just collapse like this.”

Yale and Reynolds both nodded.

“Second Bro, do you have any ideas?” Reynolds and Yale looked at George.

George said, “We have no idea what has caused Third Bro to become like this. But there are a few things that we can extrapolate,” George said gravely. “Third Bro’s clan was the Dragonblood Warrior clan. As a clan which once dominated the entire world, the members of the clan naturally wish to revive their clan to their former glory.”

Yale’s eyes lit up. “Right. Third Bro values his clan highly. For the sake of acquiring his ancestral heirloom, the warblade ‘Slaughterer’, he was even willing to auction off ‘Awakening From the Dream’.”

“Exactly.”

George nodded. “My theory is, the reason why Third Bro was always so hard on himself in training was because he had something important to him that was driving him. Most likely, restoring his clan to its former glory was that motivating impulse. Third Bro has worked hard for so many years now. He definitely wouldn’t give up that easily. We have to use this to agitate and encourage him.”

“Agitate him? Would that work?” Yale was a bit suspicious.

George said helplessly, “Do we have a better method of helping him?”

“We’ll use this method.” Reynolds harrumphed. “I can’t stand watching Third Bro continue to act like this any longer. Let’s go. The three of us will go talk with him. Let’s see what exactly is going on.”

“Fourth Bro, let Second Bro do the talking. The more you talk, the more you screw things up,” Yale reproved.

Knowing his own temperament, Reynolds nodded. George, Yale, and Reynolds looked at each other, then walked towards Linley.

After listening to Linley’s story, Bebe was quiet as well. He was also very heart-sick, heart-sick for Doehring Cowart’s death. Suddenly, Bebe felt people approaching them from behind. He leaped out of Linley’s arms and looked towards that direction.

It was Yale, George, and Reynolds.

But right now, having just finished the tale of Grandpa Doehring, Linley was lost in his memories once more, and didn’t even realize that people were approaching him.

Yale, George, and Reynolds glanced at each other, all sighing internally. Linley was an expert. Normally, Linley probably would’ve noticed the three of them before they had even entered the courtyard. But now, all three of them were right behind Linley, and yet Linley didn’t react at all.

“Third Bro,” Yale said.

Linley trembled, then slightly turned his head to look at the three of them. His

eyes were very calm. “You guys came.” After speaking, Linley turned his head back towards the creek, continuing to stare at the water.

Yale, George, and Reynolds immediately walked to stand next to the boulder Linley was sitting on.

“Third Bro.” Yale suddenly grabbed Linley by his shoulders, forcing Linley to look at him. “Third Bro, do you remember those things that had happened at the Ernst Institute, and what you often said to me?”

“Forgot,” Linley said calmly.

Yale stared. “Forgot? Third Bro, you often put me down, saying that I don’t work hard or train hard, and that in our dorm, I would be the weakest out of us four, despite physically being the largest.”

Back when the four of them were dorm-mates, naturally they would often joke with each other.

But Linley remained silent.

George looked at Yale, nodding slightly. Yale released Linley’s shoulders, and then George walked in front of Linley, saying solemnly, “Third Bro, I want to ask you. You have trained so bitterly for all these years. What was it all for?”

Linley started.

He couldn’t help but think about how he had been focused on training, ever since he was young.

“For the clan,” Linley finally responded.

Next to him, a hint of delight appeared on the faces of Yale and Reynolds. George immediately said, “Then let me ask you this. As you are now, are you behaving responsibly towards your clan?”

Looking at George, Linley smiled bitterly. In a dreary, desolate voice, he said, “My father’s dead. My mother’s dead. Tell me. What’s the point of working hard on behalf of the clan?”

Linley rose to his feet, walking towards the back courtyard.

Yale, George, and Reynolds all stared at Linley’s back, then exchange stunned

looks.

“Pointless. Everyone is dead. What’s the point of doing my best?” Linley said in a desolate, mournful voice before he disappeared past the door.

Fifteen days.

Linley had stayed within the residence for fifteen days. During these fifteen days, Yale and the others had tried everything they could think of, but no matter what they did, Linley remained as he had.

George, Reynolds, and Yale were seated together, drinking unhappily.

“What should we do? What exactly should we do? We can’t just watch as Third Bro drowns in this abyss of despair.” Reynolds angrily smashed the wine cup against the floor.

Yale and George both shook their heads as well.

These past few days, they had tried everything they could. They also asked Linley what had caused him to become like this, but Linley didn’t say a word, remaining silent.

What could they do?

“When I see how silent Third Bro is, I really worry about him. My heart hurts. Third Bro, alas...” Yale grabbed the bottle of wine and poured it directly into his mouth, drinking half of it in a swig.

They had grown up alongside Linley, and their love for each other was even greater than that between real brothers. How could they just watch as Linley collapsed like this?

Seated on a chair within his room, Linley stared at the Coiling Dragon ring on his hand. Linley could clearly recollect how Grandpa Doehring looked each time he came out of the ring.

But that scene would never, ever play out again.

On Linley’s other hand, he was wearing a second ring, an interspatial ring. After Clayde had died, the ring and its contents had become items without an owner. When he had been engaging in battle against the six Special Executors, the blood from Linley’s body had covered the ring long ago, and it naturally had

become personalized and bound to him.

But...

These past fifteen days, Linley hadn't so much as glanced at this interspatial ring or its contents. His mind was elsewhere. Even when he didn't actively dwell on it, his thoughts would always turn to scenes of him together with Grandpa Doebling. How Grandpa Doebling had looked when stroking his beard, or how he had looked when he was sternly instructing Linley. All sorts of memories, all of them so clear and vivid.

"Why. Why? Even Grandpa Doebling, the last person I had, was taken away?"

After having lost Grandpa Doebling, Linley had also lost his strongest source of support. He felt lonelier and more fragile than he ever had before. Linley tightly held Bebe in his arms. In that quiet little room, he continued to sit there, alone...

## Departure

At the borders of the Kingdom of Hess was an army numbering over eight hundred thousand soldiers. On a vast expanse of ground, military camps dotted the land like a series of mountain ranges, limitless and without end. This enormous army was, however, quite organized.

But in front of the military camp, there was a vast expanse of empty land.

“Hey, Uncle Rand. If the army of magical beasts attack, will we be able to hold?” an armored young man who looked to be sixteen or seventeen years old said in a soft voice.

Next to him was a muscular, bearded man. Removing a small flagon of liquor from his pouch, he took a small swig, then laughed loudly. “Relax. This time, in addition to the elite troops of our Kingdom of Hess, the knights of the Radiant Temple have been sent by the Radiant Church, along with many lord magi. Don’t worry. The spells of magi are quite powerful.”

“Right.” This was the young man’s first battle. Hearing the words of the veteran, he felt slightly steadier.

But that muscular man was sighing to himself inside. Because he, in fact, had seen how vicious and powerful magical beasts were. If thousands or tens of thousands of magical beasts charged towards them, the only way humanity would be able to survive was by paying a price in blood.

“Roaaaar!”

Suddenly, a low growl could be heard coming from an extremely far distance.

“Uncle Rand, I think I heard something.” The young man was growing nervous.

“It’s fine,” Rand said loudly, but suddenly, Rand squinted and looked to the south. Atop that barren, empty plain, a countless number of thickly clustered



dots could be seen.

“Magical beasts. A horde of magical beasts!”

From another part of the military camp, a shrill cry rang out. Instantly, the entire military camp began to move. From the highest-ranking generals to the lowest-level soldiers, everyone heightened their vigilance.

The entire eight hundred-thousand-man army was preparing to do battle.

“So, so many!” Many human soldiers, upon seeing the horde of magical beasts off in the distance, couldn’t help but suck in a cold breath. From far away, countless Vampiric Iron Bulls had formed into a series of formation lines. Their muscles knotted, they were charging towards the humans at high speed.

There was well over ten thousand Vampiric Iron Bulls.

“Rumble, rumble.” The Vampiric Iron Bulls charged wildly, causing the very ground to shake. The eyes of each and every Vampiric Iron Bull had turned red, and their bodies were emitting flames. They looked like a sea of fire.

The shaking earth. The endless sea of flame.

“Swish!” “Swish!” “Swish!”

Suddenly, the sky became filled with many translucent, azure-colored javelins. These javelins fell down upon the Vampiric Iron Bulls like the rain.

“The lord magi!” Many human soldiers exulted.

“Puchiii!” Every single javelin possessed astonishing power. As one of the water-style’s pure water-element spells, they were extremely powerful against fire-type magical beasts.

These icy javelins descended, either piercing into the ground or into the bodies of the Vampiric Iron Bulls. “Puchiii!” Some of the icy javelins penetrated directly through the internal organs of the Vampiric Iron Bulls, who roared in fury, ran a few steps more, then collapsed.

One Vampiric Iron Bull after another died, but the vast majority of them continued to charge forward. Even if they had suffered some light injuries, they would only grow more furious.

Fresh blood stained the ground.

“Snooort!” The Vampiric Iron Bulls roared angrily.

“Archers! Ready... Fire!” the officers shouted loudly.

The skies were instantly filled with countless arrows. The thickly clustered arrows arced down from the heavens in a dense wave.

One sharp arrow after another struck the Vampiric Iron Bulls, but their tough, knotted muscles easily deflected many of the arrows.

The tactics which human armies used against other human armies wasn't necessarily effective against magical beasts.

“Pikemen, formations!”

One heavily armored and thickly muscled warrior after another strode forward, all holding steel pikes. Assuming a defensive formation, they quietly awaited the onslaught of the Vampiric Iron Bulls. “Snoooooort!” The red-eyed Vampiric Iron Bulls charged forward.

Countless steel pikes were there to welcome the Vampiric Iron Bulls, but the Vampiric Iron Bulls only lowered their horns and continued to charge forward while roaring. Like a solid flood, they slammed viciously against the pikes.

“Puchiiii!” The Vampiric Iron Bulls were skewered by those steel pikes.

The people capable of wielding steel pikes were all at least warriors of the third rank. In addition, all of the pikemen were mutually supporting each other in their bristling pike formation, borrowing and lending strength as needed.

The first wave of Vampiric Iron Bulls was not able to break this defensive line. But behind them, more Vampiric Iron Bulls continued to charge.

The battle between the army of magical beasts and the army of men was extremely fierce. The army of beasts was composed of more than just Vampiric Iron Bulls. There were also packs of Windwolves, and also elite prides of the even more terrifying Fire Lions. There were also Landwyrms, Velocidragons, and more...

But the human army wasn't weak either. In addition to the ordinary common soldiers, they also possessed some truly powerful magi who hadn't yet made

their moves. In addition, the Radiant Church had also sent a number of magi of the seventh, eighth, and even ninth ranks. There was also a division of elite Knights of the Radiant Temple...

The battle raged for three days, and in the end, the human army was forced to retreat. In just three days, the human side had lost over three hundred thousand soldiers, and the number of wounded was even more staggering. But the magical beast's army had suffered high casualties as well.

However, both armies seemed to have a tacit understanding, as neither side made use of their Saint-level combatants. The Saint-level combatants only watched from afar, and didn't act.

Hess City was in a state of chaos.

This battle at the border had resulted in the human army retreating a hundred kilometers at once. They were now extremely close to Hess City, and many of the people within Hess City had made the decision to evacuate.

Hess City. The quiet manor where Linley was residing.

"Yale, we're leaving immediately. Quick. Don't waste any more time," Monroe Dawson shouted. "I expect that the human army won't be able to hold for many more days. The flames of war are about to engulf Hess City."

Yale nodded. "Understood, father."

"But Third Bro, he..." Yale was still concerned about Linley. George and Reynolds, by Yale's side, were both worried as well.

Monroe Dawson frowned. "How about this. You go try to persuade him one final time. No matter what though, we must leave tonight." After he spoke, Monroe Dawson turned and left.

Yale, George, and Reynolds looked at each other.

Finally, the three of them headed in the direction of Linley's room. As soon as they entered the rear courtyard, they saw Linley sitting on a chair next to a stone table, calmly staring at the straight chisel in his hand. Seeing this, Yale, George, and Reynolds didn't feel happy or excited at all.

For the sake of wanting to help Linley wake up, they would often place the

straight chisel there, along with sculptures. But Linley didn't seem to have any desire at all to sculpt. Each time he saw the chisel, he would think back to how Grandpa Doebling had painstakingly trained him to sculpt.

He could still remember how proud and majestic Grandpa Doebling had looked when he had first imparted to Linley the secrets of the Straight Chisel school. At that moment, Grandpa Doebling really had the regal bearing of a grandmaster.

"Third Bro." Yale walked directly over to him.

Linley raised his head to look at Yale. A smile formed on his face, but he said nothing.

"Third Bro, the army of magical beasts is about to break through the borders. The human side has already been forced to retreat a hundred kilometers. It's only a matter of time before they break into Hess City. We have to leave," Yale said solemnly. "Leave?" Linley was briefly startled. "Oh. Got it."

Seeing how Linley was acting, Reynolds, the most hot-tempered of the four, grabbed Linley by his clothes. Staring straight into Linley's eyes, he angrily shouted, "Third Bro, what the hell is wrong with you? Speak! Why have you become like this? The person whom I, Reynolds, admire most in this world is you. I often brag to others about you. But now? Look at yourself! Look at what you have become!"

"Admire me?" Linley said self-mockingly. "Admire what?"

"I heard Boss Yale say that because of the enmity between you and Clayde, you were willing to throw away everything to be able to kill him. You dared to act and you dared to accept the consequences. As your brother, I admired you! But now? You killed Clayde, then you killed six Special Executors of the Radiant Church. Isn't this something you should be proud of? Why have you become like this?" Reynolds was truly furious now.

Next to him, George frowned.

"Third Bro," George suddenly shouted at Linley.

Reynolds and Yale both turned to look at George. Linley looked at him as well.

“Third Bro, why did you kill those six Special Executors?” George asked with a shout. George suddenly realized... even if Linley were to kill Clayde, there was no reason for Special Executors of the Radiant Church to try and kill Linley.

After all, Clayde was no longer one of their kings.

“They wanted to kill me,” Linley said in a low voice.

“Why did they want to kill you?” George had a feeling that he had touched upon the reason behind Linley’s depression.

“Because it was the Radiant Church who killed my mother,” Linley said calmly.

Standing next to Linley, both Yale and Reynolds were both surprised, but a flash of insight suddenly appeared within George’s mind. He immediately roared, “The Radiant Church killed your mother? But you, Third Bro, aren’t going to seek revenge? What, are you afraid?”

“Not seek revenge?”

Those three words seemed to have struck Linley like a lightning bolt.

“Right. It was the Radiant Church.” Linley’s dull eyes slowly began to sharpen.

“If it wasn’t for the Radiant Church constantly searching for pure souls to offer to the Radiant Sovereign, then Clayde wouldn’t have given my mother to the Radiant Church, resulting in my mother’s death.”

“If it wasn’t for my mother’s death, my father wouldn’t have died.”

“If my father was alive, why would I go seek revenge? How could Grandpa Doebling have died as a result? What’s more, Grandpa Doebling died as a result of helping me against those six Special Executors.”

Linley began to feel hatred in his heart.

“This was all due to the Radiant Church!!! Radiant... radiant... haha! The Radiant Church is radiant? If it was radiant, then why would they murder people with pure, innocent souls and offer them to the Radiant Sovereign?” Linley’s heart began to beat with hatred.

The Radiant Temple’s actions were really too vicious.

Because of their viciousness, a series of tragedies had occurred, and his own

life was one of those tragedies.

“Boss.” Bebe saw that Linley’s face was growing firm. He was worried that Linley would be rash. He mentally said, “Boss, the last words that Grandpa Doehring said to you were that he hoped you would live well.”

Linley’s heart trembled. How could Linley forget the final words that Grandpa Doehring’s had said just before his soul had dissipated.

“Bebe, don’t worry. I will never act rashly again. I will endure... the entity I will act against is the Radiant Church, rather than one specific individual. I know my own limits.” Linley’s eyes had grown firm and hard.

Seeing the changes in Linley’s eyes and expression, Yale, George, and Reynolds couldn’t help but feel ecstatic.

In recent days, Linley had always seemed so lost, so distant. He had never looked as resolved as he now did, and his eyes had never been so firm.

“Boss Yale. Second Bro. Fourth Bro. I’ve decided to leave.” Linley made his decision.

“Third Bro, you...” Yale and the others were surprised.

“Don’t worry. I’m fine.” Linley laughed, giving each of his three bros a punch to the chest. Yale and the others began to laugh as well. Seeing Linley like this, they felt much more relieved.

Wearing a warrior’s uniform, carrying the adamantine heavy sword on his back, and with Bebe on his shoulders, Linley left by himself.

After leaving the chaotic City of Hess, Linley headed towards the east. After half a day, Linley arrived at the border to the outer regions of the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts. Seeing the boundless Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, a hint of a smile appeared on Linley’s face.

“Radiant Church, just wait. There will come a day when I will pull you out by the roots.” Linley’s gaze was extremely firm.

He had lost his father. He had lost his mother. He had lost Grandpa Doehring.

The only one Linley could now rely on was himself.

“Boss, are we going to cut through the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts?” Bebe was confused.

Linley laughed, shaking his head. “No. First, we go to the core regions of the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, and then we’ll head straight north, until we reach the very end.”

“That’s a distance of ten thousand kilometers!” Bebe was somewhat stunned. “And the core regions have a lot of extremely powerful magical beasts.” Bebe was absolutely shocked that Linley wanted to travel into the core region of the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts for ten thousand kilometers.

“If not, how shall I train? I haven’t yet mastered the correct way to use the heavy sword. If I can’t even master the heavy sword and use it properly, how will I deal with the Radiant Church?”

Linley immediately strode forward, entering the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts. And with this, Linley began the longest period of training in his entire life...

## Thunderbolt

The central regions of the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts rarely saw humans passing through. Here, magical beasts of the seventh to ninth ranks could appear at any time. Most likely, only warriors of the ninth rank would dare trespass here. But Linley, upon arriving at the central region, began to embark on a northwards journey, along the central lines of the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts. Such an incredible journey was something which even most combatants of the ninth rank wouldn't be so wild as to attempt.

Linley was only wearing a pair of raggedy hemp cloth pants. His upper body was bare, and he was barefooted as well. On his back, he carried the adamantine heavy sword. Step by step, he continued on this path which few dared tread.

As always, Bebe stood on Linley's shoulders, scanning the nearby area.

"Rustle, rustle."

Linley walked through a thick layer of dried leaves, his face calm. His backpack, Bloodviolet, straight chisel, and other clothes were all stored inside the interspatial ring. Within Clayde's interspatial ring, aside from that enormous fortune of 2.2 billion gold coins' worth of magicrystal cards, there were also dozens of precious items. Even the least valuable of them was worth millions of gold coins. The wealth accumulated by the royal clan of Fenlai over centuries was indeed a terrifying figure.

But to Linley?

Wealth was merely a worldly possession. What he truly valued was his own strength. Hadn't the Dawson Conglomerate been willing to directly offer him a hundred million gold coins to join them? And this was just based on the mere possibility that Linley would reach the Saint-rank. To truly invite a Saint-rank to join, the price would be astronomical and astonishing.



From this, one could tell how important one's personal strength was.



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Although Linley was in the core regions, Linley still quite sensibly avoided a region where he couldn't detect any magical beasts for tens of kilometers around. For such a large place within the core regions of the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts to be devoid of magical beasts most likely meant that the region was the territory of a Saint-level magical beast. Although Linley was self-confident, he still didn't want to irritate a Saint-level magical beast.

Cutting his way through brambles and thistles, Linley wasn't travelling at a particularly high speed.

"Everything needs to start from the basics." Linley was extremely pragmatic. Every day, he carried the adamantine heavy sword on his back. Slashing, chopping, piercing, swinging. Linley continuously practiced with every possible move, trying nonstop to raise his attack power.

Linley didn't train using only one method either.

He would often ponder how to train next. Using the scant information in his clan's records regarding how some of his ancestors had trained, he tried to form a correct training regime for himself.

The correct way of training was to not aim too high and too far right away.

The dawning spring, the flourishing summer, the cool autumn, the freezing winter. No matter what season it was, Linley continued to only wear those tattered pants, which had been ripped countless times due to his Dragonform transformation. His upper body remained bare.

Linley had discovered something...

When he was barefooted, he could more clearly sense the thrumming pulse of the earth. Standing on the ground, his heart was as steady as the vast earth itself. Linley's usage of the adamantine heavy sword also began to embody the weight of the world itself.

His upper body was bare.

Feeling the movement of the air against his body, Linley felt as though his entire being had become part of the wind itself. Wind, by its nature, was invisible and formless. When using the Bloodviolet flexible sword, Linley felt that he was wielding it with greater and greater ease.

Because of this, Linley now emanated an aura that was both stable and immovable like the earth, and as graceful as the wind. These two auras should have been opposites, but the strange thing was, coming from Linley, they felt very natural and innate.



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Focusing primarily on the heavy sword, secondarily on the flexible sword, and also sparing some time for stone sculpting. At night, Linley would be in the meditative trance. Linley's entire life had entered a very particular regime of training.

Sometimes, when he saw massive waterfalls crashing down from the top of the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, Linley would feel excited and leap into the waterfalls, training beneath the water.

Seeing those long, pure rivers, Linley would often wade into their waters.

When he saw boulders atop mountain peaks, if Linley felt struck by inspiration, he would directly climb onto the top of the peaks and carve out a statue, perhaps spending several nights on each one.



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He did whatever he wanted.

Linley's mind and spirit were more natural and more at-ease than they ever had been before. Training under these conditions, Linley completely forgot the passage of time. He only felt that his strength was improving every single day, and every single improvement made him feel happy and moved.

The path of training was a long, winding one.

This was a hard road to travel, but on this path there were constant new breakthroughs, making one feel gratified and moved.



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Linley began to grow a beard, and his originally short hair began to grow long as well. His eyes, previously filled with a proud aloofness, had become calm and tranquil, due to the influence of being in touch with nature for so long.

Only occasionally while training would his eyes become terrifyingly sharp.

Linley's temperament, as well, had become molded by nature to become more stable. Without Doehring Cowart's guidance, Linley had no one to rely upon. Naturally, he continued to develop and mature even more.



\*

"Rumble."

Water thundered down from the hundred-meter-high waterfall, smashing down against the deep pool below, spraying water everywhere. Right next to the waterfall, there was a large boulder sticking up from the ground.

There was a person seated cross legged atop the boulder, with a black heavy sword resting atop his legs.

It was early dawn. The sky was just beginning to lighten. Within the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, one of the things Linley enjoyed doing was enjoying the clear dawn air.

"Ah..." Linley opened his eyes.

He glanced behind him, and saw Bebe curled up right next to him. Bebe's two little claws were stuck directly into the stone itself to make sure there was no possibility he could roll off and fall.

"Bebe, time to move," Linley said with a laugh.

Bebe opened his eyes lazily, glancing all around himself. Then he shook his head, clearing it of the last remnants of sleep, and stood up. “Boss. I’m hungry.”

“Let’s go. We’ll eat later.” Linley leaped off the boulder. Moving as gracefully as the wind itself, Linley traversed several dozen meters with that leap, landing on the opposite shore of the pond. Also jumping off the boulder, Bebe transformed into a black streak, finally landing next to Linley’s feet.

A man and a magical beast once more began their voyage.

But before they had gone too far, Linley’s footsteps suddenly halted. Bebe looked questioningly at Linley.

“There’s a magical beast nearby,” Linley said mentally.

Bebe stared. Bebe could now be considered an early-stage magical beast of the ninth rank. Generally speaking, there were very few magical beasts that could draw near without him sensing it. But this time, he hadn’t sensed anything.

With his feet pressed against the earth and his ability to sense the wind, it would be difficult for anything moving nearby to not attract Linley’s attention.

“This magical beast’s movements are light and graceful. I can’t sense its movements on the earth at all. But when it moves, it causes vibrations in the wind,” Linley said mentally.

Bebe nodded.



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A Golden Tattooed Panther was latched onto a tree trunk, not moving at all. Panthers could be considered one of the fastest type of land-based magical beasts.

In particular, the Saint-level Electrobolt Panther’s movement speed made it an incredibly terrifying Saint-level magical beast to deal with.

Golden Tattooed Panthers were magical beasts of the seventh rank. But as a panther-type magical beast, it naturally possessed the high speed which all

panthers were known for. Its explosive, short distance pouncing speed was even superior to magical beasts of the eighth rank.

The Golden Tattooed Panther suddenly exerted pressure with its four limbs.

“Swish.”

It leapt atop another tree. Panthers were extremely skilled at running and leaping about on tree tops, and were very well known for that as well. From within the dense leaves, the Golden Tattooed Panther had already seen that distant human figure.

The Golden Tattooed Panther waited quietly. Waited for the human to draw near.

Indeed, the human and the black Shadowmouse were beginning to come nearer.

“A black Shadowmouse? Not a threat.” Magical beasts of the seventh rank possessed very high intelligence. The primary focus of the Golden Tattooed Panther was that human. The aura that human emitted had already raised the Golden Tattooed Panther’s caution level. But the Golden Tattooed Panther had the feeling that this human shouldn’t be too powerful.

Indeed, in his base form, Linley was only a late-stage warrior of the seventh rank.

Generally speaking, when a magical beast of the seventh rank fought a human of the seventh rank, the magical beast would have the advantage.

“Swish.” Leaping off from the tree trunk, the Golden Tattooed Panther transformed into a vicious golden blur, gracefully soaring towards Linley.

The seemingly totally unprepared human, suddenly...

As fast as lightning, drew that adamantine heavy sword from his back while retreating! At the same time, he chopped down with that sword against the Golden Tattooed Panther with tremendous power.

Already in mid-leap, there was no way for the Golden Tattooed Panther to change its trajectory. The only thing it could do was to do his best to move his head away.

“Bam.”

Flashing out like a lightning bolt, the adamantine heavy sword viciously slammed against the Golden Tattooed Panther’s body. Where it landed on the Golden Tattooed Panther’s body, a deep crevice appeared. The sounds of bones shattering could be heard.

With that ‘bam’ sound, the Golden Tattooed Panther’s body crashed to the ground. It lay twitching there, blood pouring out of its mouth. But within ten seconds, the Golden Tattooed Panther moved no more.

Linley gracefully resheathed his adamantine heavy sword.

“Bebe, our breakfast today will be panther flesh,” Linley said casually.

To Linley and Bebe, this was just a very ordinary event. Within the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, they would kill several magical beasts every day.

If an expert at using the sword had been present, they would clearly be able to tell that Linley, despite only being a late-stage warrior of the seventh rank, was able to utilize this 3,600-pound heavy sword at an extremely high level. Not only did the weight of the heavy sword not hinder Linley, Linley was even able to make use of its weight to make the speed of the heavy sword’s blows faster.

When chopping, he could actually chop a magical beast of the seventh rank to death at one blow. This power was simply astonishing.

Linley and Bebe began to roast panther flesh in the middle of the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts.

“Boss, how powerful is the most powerful attack you can now use with that heavy sword? A few days ago, you said you had a breakthrough,” Bebe asked.

They had been in the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts for over a year now. During this year, Linley’s mind had become one with nature, and he had completely immersed himself in his training. This year and a half of training had improved his abilities at an extremely rapid pace.

“My most powerful attack? Hard to say. Speaking in more general terms, I should be able to fight most magical beasts of the eighth rank in human form alone,” Linley said confidently.

This wasn't arrogance. This was confidence in his own power.

"The panther meat smells so good." Bebe sniffed the air with his nose.

"Hrm?" Linley frowned, then suddenly laughed. "Bebe, when we roast meat, we often attract attention from magical beasts. Only, this time, this magical beast seemed to be quite a slow and clumsy one."

After waiting a good while, Linley and Bebe finally saw a magical beast appear.

A Velocidragon.

"Velocidragon?" Linley began to laugh. Linley was now quite familiar with Velocidragons. Despite being magical beasts of the seventh rank, they possessed extremely powerful defense. Although both were of the seventh rank, a Velocidragon's defense was far more formidable than that of a Golden Tattooed Panther. But in turn, the Golden Tattooed Panther was far faster than a Velocidragon.

"Boss, you say that your attack power is really high now. Do you think you can chop a Velocidragon to death with one sword stroke?" Bebe suddenly said.

The scales of a Velocidragon were nearly half a meter thick, and the bones of its skull were extremely hard and dense. Although Velocidragons were fairly slow, their defense could match an ordinary magical beast of the eighth rank.

"One sword blow? I haven't tested it yet. Let me give it a try."

Linley drew the adamantine heavy sword from the sheath on his back, then began walking step by step towards the Velocidragon.

The Velocidragon was two stories tall and nearly twenty meters long. Compared to this enormous creature, Linley was nothing more than a small speck.

"Groooooowl." The Velocidragon roared angrily at Linley.

But wielding the adamantine heavy sword in his hands, Linley continued to walk towards the Velocidragon, one barefooted step at a time.

Suddenly...

Linley's movements sped up dramatically as he charged towards the Velocidragon. Letting out an angry roar, the Velocidragon sent its draconic tail whipping towards Linley. The Velocidragon's tail was an extremely quick weapon.

"Clang." Linley's adamantine heavy sword suddenly moved at high speed and blocked the draconic tail.

Despite the great lashing force of the Velocidragon's tail, Linley leapt off the ground, borrowing the force of the tail to fly over the Velocidragon.

"Uh, this is a human?" The Velocidragon was surprised to discover that the man in front of him had wielded that adamantine heavy sword as easily and as naturally as the grass bowing from the wind. And now, that man was smashing directly down at his head with the sword.

The Velocidragon was extremely confident. Its skull was, after all, the toughest part of its body.

Indeed...

When that agile, flowing black heavy sword touched his skull, it posed no danger to the Velocidragon at all. But all of a sudden, just as it touched the skull, an incredibly powerful force exploded from the sword. Like a sudden flood bursting through a dam, that astonishing power poured out all at once. It only heard a 'crack' sound, and then everything went dark.

Bebe watched this scene in astonishment.

Linley had only struck the skull, the toughest part of a Velocidragon's body, with a single blow from his sword. And then, the Velocidragon's head had split open like a fragile egg, with brain matter and blood pouring out. The massive, powerful body of the Velocidragon slumped to the ground, as Linley gracefully landed as well.

"Boss! Wow! You are that powerful now?" Bebe ran over excitedly.

Linley laughed. "Over the past year, I have been able to almost perfectly merge my own strength with my Dragonblood battle-qi. And then, based on what I have learned from my connection to the earth, I broke past the simple levels of using 'strength' and 'battle-qi'. I have arrived at the level which the



ancestors of the Baruch clan described as 'wielding the heavy as though it were light'. Only now, I have managed to develop this technique: 'Thunderbolt'.

## The Howling Worldwolf

The most basic underpinnings of training with the heavy sword lay in combining battle-qi along with physical strength in utilizing it.

Right after the adamantine heavy sword had been forged in the City of Hess, when Linley had used the adamantine heavy sword to attack the violet-robed Special Executors, he was not capable of combining his strength and his battle-qi to use the heavy sword in a meaningful way.

The heavy sword was not meant to be used with pure brute force.

It lay in conserving every little bit of strength to allow the heavy sword to reach its maximum possible velocity, while at the same time combining physical strength and battle-qi to reach the most optimal level possible.

After spending more than a year, Linley had finally become able to wield the adamantine heavy sword as easily as though it were his hands, without wasting any strength at all. Despite a limited amount of strength and battle-qi, he was able to raise the power of the adamantine heavy sword to an extremely high level.

But this was still just the basics.

Above this basic level was the second level, a different realm of possibilities. This was something Linley had suddenly awoken to when he saw the crashing waterfalls within the mountain grotto.

To wield something heavy as though it were light was easy to say, but hard to do.

In truth, it required one to be able to perfectly control one's battle-qi and physical strength. And then, one could suddenly unleash all of one's power, like the unending, cascading waters of the waterfall. The power that erupted from a blow such as this was extremely great.

This was the principle underneath Linley's 'Thunderbolt' technique.

But this was easier said than done. It required an extremely solid grasp of the basics. If one didn't have enough control over one's strength and battle-qi, even after one understood the principles of this technique, one still wouldn't be able to utilize it.

"As powerful as that? Boss, is this the most powerful way to use the heavy sword?" Bebe said in surprise.

Laughing, Linley shook his head. "Not even close. Based on the information contained within my clan's records, the way of using heavy weapons can be described as having three levels. The first is to master and perfect the basics. The second is to be able to wield something heavy as though it were light. And the third is known as 'impose'."

"'Impose'?" Bebe was a bit confused. "What is that?"

"I don't know either." Linley shook his head. "After all, my clan's records, aside from the Secret Dragonblood Manual, primarily consists of general descriptions of the history of my clan and some stories of my ancestors. With regards to that ancestor who was able to 'wield something heavy as though it were light', there were only a few lines describing his power. That record also mentioned that the third level was 'impose', but what exactly 'impose' is, it didn't describe in detail, so I don't know either."

Linley didn't understand.

Could 'impose' be referring to an imposing manner?

But when wielding the adamantine heavy sword, how much could an imposing manner possibly add to attack power?

"I haven't had that moment of enlightenment yet. No way to understand it." Linley shook his head.

Linley knew very well that he had not yet in fact mastered this level of 'using something heavy as though it were light'. Because the most important part of the 'Thunderbolt' technique was to suddenly release all of the power available at the last moment.

How would one further increase the power of this technique?

Right now, Linley was suddenly releasing all of his strength and battle-qi in a brute force manner, but Linley knew that this was a stupid, crude method.

“Pity that there’s no signposts on the path of training.” Linley chuckled, then ceased his idle speculations.



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Deep autumn. The prime, virgin forests of the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts were covered with yellowing leaves.

This was the late autumn of year 10001 of the Yulan calendar. Linley had already entered the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts for more than a year and a half, but he had only travelled five or six thousand kilometers thus far.

He spent most of every day in training, progressing only a few dozen kilometers at most in his journey.

Late at night, not a sound could be heard. Within the central areas of the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, beneath a giant tree which would take five or six men linking hands to embrace the trunks of, Linley was quietly sitting cross-legged in the meditative trance.

Slowly...

The skies began to brighten. Linley opened his eyes, a hint of a smile on his face.

The light, pure dawn wind was blowing. Several leaves slowly spun about and fell down. Watching these leaves fall, Linley was silent.

“Boss?” Bebe casually opened his eyes. Questioningly, he said, “You woke up? Why didn’t you wake me?”

Actually, every day, when Linley woke up, Bebe would wake up as well. But every day, Bebe would wait for Linley to wake him up before he would be willing to open his eyes. Today, though, Linley hadn’t called him.

“Bebe, I seem to have made a breakthrough,” Linley suddenly said mentally to

Bebe.

“A breakthrough?” Bebe immediately jumped to his feet. He asked with excitement, “What sort of breakthrough have you had?”

Linley laughed. “My spiritual energy has finally reached the level of a magus of the eighth rank.”

“A magus of the eighth rank?!” Bebe immediately yelped in surprise.

That winter, when he was sixteen years old, Linley had crafted the sculpture ‘Awakening From the Dream’, and the rapid improvement he had gained over those ten days and ten nights had resulted in Linley’s spiritual energy strengthening tenfold, arriving at the level of spiritual power possessed by a late-stage magus of the seventh rank.

He was sixteen years old that winter, and already at the late-stage seventh rank!

From then until now, three years had passed.

While he had been at Fenlai City, Linley’s spiritual energy hadn’t improved that fast, and based on that rate of improvement, Linley probably would’ve needed five or six years to advance from the late-stage of the seventh rank to the eighth rank. But this year in the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, Linley had totally submerged himself into nature, and each time he had engaged in stone sculpting, he had been so natural and unrestrained.

His rate of improvement in spiritual energy was quite noticeable.

Right now...

Linley’s spiritual energy finally reached the eighth rank as a magus.

“Boss, how powerful are spells of the eighth rank?” Bebe said curiously.

“You’ll find out if you are willing to give it a try.” A hint of a smile was on Linley’s face. Bebe stared at him, then said proudly, “Come. I, Bebe, am not afraid of magical beasts of the eighth rank, much less a spell of the eighth rank.”

Linley immediately begin to chant the words to a spell.

Shortly afterwards, a large amount of earth elemental essence began to

rapidly solidify and condense near Linley. The mageforce in Linley's body, as well, was beginning to rouse.

"Whoosh." A wind suddenly arose in front of Linley, catching and tossing up all the fallen leaves around him. An angry howl could suddenly be heard, as an earth-colored, three-meter-tall wolf suddenly appeared in front of Linley. This massive wolf was three meters tall and ten meters long. All the muscles on its body seemed as tough and gnarled as steel, and its four limbs were filled with power.

Earth spell of the eighth rank – the Howling Worldwolf!

"Hooooooooowl!"

The Howling Worldwolf let out an enraged snarl, then charged at Bebe, but Bebe only playfully stood there with confidence, staring at the Howling Worldwolf.

"Swish!" Suddenly, an Earthen Spear Array erupted from the ground beneath Bebe.

"Whoah!" Bebe let out a cry of surprise, leaping into the air.

The Earthen Spear Array hadn't managed to hurt Bebe in the slightest, but at this time, the Howling Worldwolf had arrived next to him. Bebe immediately let out a shrill screech, and his body suddenly enlarged.

"Hooooooooowl!"

Fangs bared and maw bloody, the Howling Worldwolf bit down at Bebe, while Bebe also bit angrily at the Howling Worldwolf. With a 'crunch' sound, Bebe ripped apart the throat of the Howling Worldwolf.

But the Howling Worldwolf didn't seem to be hurt at all as it slashed at Bebe with his fierce claws.

"Whap!"

Bebe was knocked flying, smashing against the ground, creating a minor crater. Bebe immediately crawled out, staring angrily at the Howling Worldwolf. Just then, the Howling Worldwolf had carried a tremendous amount of power in its claws.

“Bebe, this Howling Worldwolf isn’t a magical beast. It’s an earth-element construct, totally composed of mageforce and elemental essence. It has no vital weak points,” Linley’s voice rang out playfully.

Bebe instantly understood.

To a construct created solely from mageforce and elemental essence, whether you bit it on the tail or at the throat, there really was no difference in terms of damage done.

“Shkreeeee!”

Bebe was truly furious now. Transforming into a black blur, he flew at the Howling Worldwolf, which ripped towards Bebe with its fangs. But Bebe dodged its attack, and then raked the Howling Worldwolf with his claws. In the blink of an eye, Bebe had raked the Howling Worldwolf nearly a hundred times, forcibly bringing his opponent to the breaking point.

“Bam!” The Howling Worldwolf’s body suddenly began to grow brighter, and then in the blink of an eye, it exploded.

Bebe was knocked flying by the force of the explosion, smashing hard against a nearby tree, snapping the tree in half, then falling to the ground.

“Bebe, what do you think?” Linley knew exactly how powerful Bebe was. This bit of offensive force wasn’t enough to hurt Bebe.

Bebe quickly ran over to him. In a wounded voice, he said, “Boss, that Howling Worldwolf’s offensive attacks weren’t lower than an ordinary magical beast of the eighth rank. And it doesn’t have any weaknesses either. What a freak. Even when it was about to die, it engaged in a suicidal explosion.”

When its body was about to collapse, a construct formed from mageforce and elemental essence would naturally explode.

A dual-element magus of the eighth rank. Now, even in human form, Linley would still be considered a truly formidable person. The power of eighth rank spells was very astonishing.

For example, the ‘Brutal Tornado’ wind spell. This Brutal Tornado spell could easily annihilate an army of thousands of soldiers. In truth, even the attack of

the Howling Worldwolf would destroy most small armies. The Howling Worldwolf possessed astonishing defensive powers. Only a freak like Bebe would be capable of so easily penetrating the Howling Worldwolf's defense.

The Howling Worldwolf was extremely fast and possessed astonishing defensive powers. And, it had no weak points.

One could imagine how much havoc it would wreak upon an army.

"To a kingdom, a magus of the eighth rank is more important than an army with ten thousand soldiers." Linley understood this logic. And magi of the ninth rank, in turn, were more important than an army of a hundred thousand soldiers. As for Saint-level Grand Magi, they were more important than an army of a million soldiers.

By casting a single forbidden spell, 'Annihilating Tempest', an entire army of a million soldiers would instantly be destroyed.



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Linley's elemental essence affinity was exceptional. Naturally, he didn't need too much time to refine more mageforce. Given the additional support provided by the Straight Chisel School of sculpting, Linley didn't need to spend too much time training himself as a magus.

And since he could Dragonform now, the speed of his training as a warrior was many times faster than before as well.



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His adamantine heavy sword in hand, Linley was walking atop a large mountain. He casually swung and chopped the adamantine heavy sword in every direction. "Whap. Slap." Every movement was very natural and graceful.

But whenever the adamantine heavy sword touched any boulders, the boulders would immediately shatter.



Either they would shatter into dozens of pieces, or they would explode, or they would turn to dust...

Linley constantly tested himself and tested out how to have his 'Thunderbolt' technique release more power. How to, using the same amount of battle-qi, increase the effectiveness of his attacks.

"Whew." Sensing that he had used up over half of his Dragonblood battle-qi, Linley immediately sheathed his adamantine heavy blade.

With a flip of his hand, Bloodviolet appeared in his grasp.

Linley immediately began to leap about, the Bloodviolet flexible sword in his hands flashing every which way gracefully. The strength of the Bloodviolet sword lay in its speed and its ability to attack unpredictably.

"Swoosh!"

The Bloodviolet sword slashed in the direction of a small nearby tree. Halfway there, though, Bloodviolet suddenly curved like a serpent, and in a flash, it wrapped itself around the tree. With another violet flash, the tree was cut in half.

With a quiver, the Bloodviolet sword suddenly became straight again.

"Swish." The Bloodviolet sword stabbed forward. Its sharp edge wreathed with a greenish-black light, the sword easily plunged straight into a nearby stone wall.

"Hrm?"

Linley suddenly frowned, pulling out Bloodviolet. He stared at the Bloodviolet sword suspiciously. "Inside the sword... what in the world..." Just then, Linley had been focusing his spiritual energy on Bloodviolet, controlling its fluctuations and contortions. As he had done so, he suddenly had discovered an aura that made his heart tremble with fear.

"Can it be that?" Linley's heart suddenly clenched.

Previously, when he had been in that dangerous situation in the Radiant Temple, the Coiling Dragon ring had emitted a tremendously powerful burst of power. This Bloodviolet flexible sword was also a divine artifact, but it wasn't as

powerful as Linley had thought it would be. Linley had always been wondering if there was some secret contained within this Bloodviolet flexible sword.

Linley immediately focused his spiritual energy inside Bloodviolet, carefully probing it from within.

In the past, Linley also tried to do this before he had reached the eighth rank as a magus, but he hadn't been able to find anything. But now, he was a magus of the eighth rank.

"Hrm?" Linley's spiritual energy finally seemed to detect something.

A bloodthirsty, crazed aura suddenly came into contact with Linley's spiritual energy. Linley suddenly seemed to see a boundless sea of blood. Countless corpses. An endless number of bones.

That crazed, bloodthirsty, violent aura directly invaded Linley's spiritual energy, and then, as fast as lightning, it began to pervade Linley's very soul...

## A Slaughter

That endless sea of blood was filled with countless white skeletons, and all sorts of different corpses. Some of the corpses belonged to ten-meter-tall giants that were covered in scales with two horns sprouting from their heads. Others had white skeletons that glimmered with a faint gold color...

“Ah...”

Linley’s eyes began to turn red, as he suddenly began to emit a terrifying, baleful aura. That baleful aura somehow seemed to take physical form as a faint, bloody mist began to emanate from around Linley’s body. And surrounded by that baleful aura, Linley seemed like he was a fiendish god.

Bebe, not too far away from Linley, naturally could feel that oppressive, baleful aura.

Shocked, all the fur on Bebe’s body stood straight up, and Bebe could clearly feel that all of his muscles were quivering, and his blood was pumping faster. Even his claws were shaking, not entirely under his own control.

Terror.

Terror the likes of which he had never felt before!

“Bo—, Boss, what’s going on?” Bebe said frantically.

Right now, Linley was still in control of himself. Only, after being pervaded by that baleful aura, Linley felt a powerful desire to go out and kill.

“This Bloodviolet is?...” Linley forcibly suppressed his desire to kill, lowering his head to stare at the sword.

“Hiss...” Linley could see that in his hands, Bloodviolet was glowing with a devilish red light that flowed, as though blood was flowing on and through it. The entire Bloodviolet sword was shuddering slightly. Linley could feel the intense desire of Bloodviolet to kill! Kill unceasingly!

But right now, the more strongly Linley tried to suppress the urge to kill, the more powerful that urge grew. Linley's eyes began to turn more and more red.

"Ah!!!" Linley let out a wild howl.

As though he had transformed into a tornado of movement, Linley ran down the mountain. In his hand, Bloodviolet was flashing everywhere like lightning. Every place Linley passed by, the trees and the stones were all transformed into rubble and debris.

Seeing Linley's wild charge, Bebe stood where he was hesitantly for a moment. Bebe had truly been terrified by that baleful aura, the likes of which he had never felt before. But for the sake of his Boss...

"Grr!" Bebe ground his teeth, then suddenly flew down the mountain as well.



\*

Not too far away from the mountain Linley had been on was a clear pond of water. There was a pack of Goldmane Mastiffs living next to the pond. Goldmane Mastiffs were pack type creatures, unlike the solitary panthers or tigers. Generally speaking, panthers or tigers might band together for major battles, but in their day to day lives, these types of magical beasts would generally live separately. But Goldmane Mastiffs were different.

Goldmane Mastiffs had a strong pack mentality and were adept at teamwork.

Goldmane Mastiffs possessed extremely powerful claws. This pack of Goldmane Mastiffs numbered over a hundred. Although Goldmane Mastiffs were magical beasts of the eighth rank, even your average magical beast of the ninth rank wouldn't dare provoke such a pack. They definitely were a local power to be reckoned with.

Right now...

These Goldmane Mastiffs were either lying in rest next to the pond, or casually strolling about, or perhaps frolicking and swimming in the water. This wasn't yet the time for them to hunt for food, and given their strength, they never feared that they would lack for food.

But many Goldmane Mastiffs suddenly looked cautiously up the mountain. Given their alert senses, they could easily sense that something living was moving towards them at high speed. The Goldmane Mastiffs that had been lying down all stood up, staring coldly at this creature which was moving towards them.

Goldmane Mastiffs were three meters tall and six meters long. Their entire bodies were covered with golden fur, and they seemed lion-like. But their eyes radiated a strange golden glow.

“Grrrrrrrrrr.” The pack of Goldmane Mastiffs suddenly began to growl.

They finally saw the creature that was provoking them. It was a human wielding a devilish violet sword whose body was wrapped up with a red light. These extremely intelligent Goldmane Mastiffs suddenly felt at ease again. It was just a human. Unless this human was at the Saint level, he wouldn’t be able to do anything to them.

But suddenly...

When the human drew close enough for that red mist to cover them, all of the Goldmane Mastiffs suddenly felt terrified like never before. This terrifying aura was far more powerful than even the aura of a Saint-level magical beast. Under this oppressive, baleful aura, all of the Goldmane Mastiffs felt as though their limbs were no longer under their own control, and one after another knelt down in terror as they lowered their proud heads.

“Blood... blood...”

Linley was doing his best to remain clear-minded, but he could feel the intense desire of Bloodviolet to drink blood. After having roused the baleful aura contained within Bloodviolet, Bloodviolet had to be sated by drinking enough blood.

“Swish!”

Transforming into a violet ray of light, Bloodviolet passed straight through the neck of one of the Goldmane Mastiffs. A meter-high mastiff head flew off.

Linley’s speed was simply too fast.

No. Accurately speaking, Bloodviolet's killing speed was too fast. Only after it had chopped through eight Goldmane Mastiffs heads did the first head fly off. And only now did the remaining Goldmane Mastiffs, who had all been kneeling in terror, wake to their senses.

"Hoowwwl!" Nearby, the largest of the Goldmane Mastiffs forced itself to stand up, then raised his head up and began howling angrily. But despite this, its limbs were still trembling, and its eyes were still filled with disbelieving fear.

Their intelligence, however, was very high.

These Goldmane Mastiffs all knew that this human emitting this terrifying aura was going to kill them all. Even though they were terrified, they were still going to resist.

Having drank so much fresh blood, Bloodviolet emitted a joyful sound.

"Die! Die!" The more he killed, the more Linley felt as though the desire to kill was consuming him. Right now, the only desire he had was to kill.

The remaining hundred or so Goldmane Mastiffs didn't dare to directly face Linley. All of them turned tail and ran.

"Swish!" Linley's Bloodviolet sword chopped towards the head of another Goldmane Mastiff.

Knowing that it wasn't going to be able to flee, this Goldmane Mastiff turned back and opened its mouth, biting down at Linley while breathing flames from its mouth. Instinctively, Linley's body became covered by his azure-blackish Dragonblood battle-qi, which protected him and blocked the flame breath of this Goldmane Mastiff.

When the violet sword drew close to the Goldmane Mastiff's head, the Goldmane Mastiff could clearly sense that the baleful aura this violet sword was emitting was now several times stronger than before. This terror, the likes of which it had never felt before, caused its limbs to go soft. Even the energy being generated by the magicite core in its body had come to a halt, and it just stood there, allowing the violet sword to cut its head off.

Surrounded by a baleful aura that had taken physical form, Linley constantly chased after and killed one Goldmane Mastiff after another.

These local tyrants, the Goldmane Mastiffs, were now truly panicked. They had no idea where this fiendish god had come from. That baleful aura was now so strong that even their bodily functions were being affected. Even if they wanted to fight, their bodies were no longer under their total control.

Blood sprayed everywhere.

Hacked limbs and severed heads flew everywhere...

In the blink of an eye, thirty Goldmane Mastiffs had died on the spot.

“Boss, boss!” Bebe called out frantically.

Bebe could sense the state that Linley was currently in. He was terrified that in the future, Linley would have permanently transformed into a constantly slaughtering madman. Slowly, Linley’s form slowed its movements.

“Bebe. I’m fine,” Linley’s voice rang out in Bebe’s mind.

Bebe immediately ran over. Bebe could clearly see Linley’s bare upper body, his forehead covered in sweat, and that faint layer of red on his skin. Right now, Linley’s eyes were closed, and his chest was rising and falling like a blacksmith’s bellows.

“Whew...”

Letting out a long breath, Linley finally opened his eyes. Linley’s eyes had now returned to their normal clarity.

“Boss, you... what happened to you?” Bebe said worriedly.

With a hint of lingering fear, Linley looked at the Bloodviolet sword in his hands. Right now, Linley was very certain that this Bloodviolet sword had been a slaughterer’s sword, and that it had killed an extraordinarily high number of people. Linley even suspected that the endless sea of blood, bones, and corpses that he had sensed earlier had all been the handiwork of Bloodviolet.

But those corpses... Linley didn’t even recognize most of them, or what races they belonged to.

“Is there a race of humans with the heads of bulls? Can it be that these are the legendary minotaurs from other planes?” Linley thought to himself questioningly. From his books, Linley had seen references to minotaurs before,

but there were no such creatures in the Yulan continent.

But many of the other corpses, Linley had never seen or heard of, even in the books and records he had read.

For example, those massive giant creatures that were ten meters tall, covered with thick black scales, and had two massive horns sprouting from their foreheads. The aura emanating from their corpses alone filled Linley with dread. Linley had the feeling that those massive creatures definitely were not one whit weaker than some of the Saint-level magical beasts he had seen.

But there were innumerable numbers of corpses of those giant creatures!

It was true! Those corpses of creatures that were no weaker than Saint-level magical beasts could be seen everywhere in that boundless sea of blood.

“Who was the previous owner of this Bloodviolet Godsword? He actually killed this many powerful combatants.” Linley was secretly shocked. He was absolutely certain that this sword definitely came from one of the Higher Planes, because the Yulan continent simply never had this many powerful combatants.

As he thought back to how he had originally acquired Bloodviolet, Linley understood something. This Bloodviolet Godsword truly did not originate from the Yulan continent.

With a thought, Linley absorbed Bloodviolet into his interspatial ring.

“Whew. Unless it is absolutely necessary, I definitely cannot activate the baleful aura hidden within this Bloodviolet sword again.” Linley had already made up his mind about this.

At this time, Bebe leaped onto Linley’s shoulders.

“Boss. What just happened?” Bebe asked.

Linley laughed as he looked at Bebe. “Bebe, do you remember how we discovered that magical formation back when we were in the Foggy Valley? At that time, Grandpa Doehring had said that the mysterious magical formation was even more complicated and mysterious than Saint-level magical formations. And Bloodviolet was used to support that magical formation. At



that time, we suspected that Bloodviolet wasn't as simple a sword as it appeared to be. And indeed, that is the case."

Bebe immediately listened alertly.

"This Bloodviolet Godsword most likely has experienced endless amounts of murder and slaughter, and also killed many powerful combatants, including those of the Saint level, or even higher! And precisely because that is the case, within this Bloodviolet Godsword there is a terrifyingly powerful baleful aura. Once it has been activated and agitated, even those Goldmane Mastiffs quaked and knelt down in fear. But despite having its positives, it also has its negatives. Once it's been activated, Bloodviolet absolutely must be fed blood. Otherwise, Bloodviolet will refuse to obey my intentions and won't obediently go into my interspatial ring."

Bebe nodded.

"Boss, this Bloodviolet sword really is terrifying. Just then, that baleful aura even made me tremble with fear as well, and my limbs were shaking too. In a situation like that, even though I'm a magical beast of the ninth rank, I perhaps would've only been able to use half of my power," Bebe said honestly.

As for magical beasts of the eighth rank, when oppressed by that baleful aura, they probably wouldn't even be able to use a tenth of their power.

When the baleful aura within Bloodviolet was activated, the opponent's own power would be impacted and drop. If even a magical beast of the ninth rank would be influenced so dramatically, one could easily imagine how useful this sword would prove to be in battle.

"But being possessed by that cruel, vicious, wild, murdering urge really is not a good feeling. Once the baleful aura is activated, I absolutely must kill a large number of living creatures before that wild, cruel, murdering urge is sated." Linley had just experienced that urge, so he knew full well what it was like.

Unless it was absolutely necessary, it was best not to activate that baleful aura.

"Alright, Bebe. Let's collect the magicite cores and continue."

"Magicite cores? Wow, so many." Bebe excitedly went to collect the magicite

cores.

After collecting the cores of those several dozen Goldmane Mastiffs, Linley and Bebe continued on their journey, letting the corpses of the Goldmane Mastiffs remain there. In the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, once dead, even the most powerful of magical beasts would be no more than food for other animals.

Their discovery of this secret contained within Bloodviolet was nothing more but a side event.

Linley continued his lifestyle of training. Every day, he would travel around ten kilometers, with most of his time spent training. As far as how the heavy sword was meant to be used, almost every day, Linley would have a new insight. Linley was totally immersed in that wondrous feeling of training and improving.

## The Black Shadow

The first snow of that winter was a major one. Many places in the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts were covered with snow as well. Various tracks could be seen clearly, some belonging to humans, and as well as magical beasts of various sizes.

“What a large blizzard.”

Linley still wore only those ragged hemp cloth pants, his upper body bare. Although the temperature was so cold that even rapidly flowing water would freeze, Linley didn't fear it in the slightest.

Barefooted, Linley continued to stride forward.

“Boss, it should almost be the time of the Yulan Festival, right?” Bebe guessed.

After having been in the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts for so long, Linley didn't even have a rough idea of what day it was. Although Linley did have a pocket watch, the watch was only capable of keeping simple time, and didn't track dates.

“Should be around that time.” Linley nodded.

After having been in the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts for around two years, Linley's prowess as a warrior had increased at a fairly rapid rate. He was at the peak-stage of the seventh rank now. But in terms of using the heavy sword, his skill in wielding his adamantine heavy sword was immeasurably higher than it was originally. In particular, after becoming a dual-element magus of the eighth rank, when he used his magic and his warrior skills simultaneously, his power was raised to a very high level.

“Hrm?” Bebe and Linley both turned to look back.

Not too far away, two sturdy warriors dressed in leather armor and holding

weapons were running frantically, seemingly panic-stricken. Seeing that it was other humans, Linley continued on his path. The Mountain Range of Magical Beasts had a large number of human experts training within it, and in these past two years, Linley had encountered quite a few humans. With respect to the humans in the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, Linley had a simple principle – Don't irritate others.

After all, plenty of people were here with the intention of taking the magicite crystals in other people's bags for themselves. Because Linley had an interspatial ring, he didn't have to carry his bag with him. Thus, there were very few people who had the desire to act against Linley.

"Wait, wait!" A frantic shout from behind.

But Linley didn't pay them any mind at all, continuing to walk forward. Those two people ran quite fast, and they quickly overtook Linley. When they drew near, Linley immediately halted and turned around.

"What do you want?" Linley stared coldly at those two men.

Linley could tell that these two were not weak. However, a human's level of power was hard to judge at a glance. Linley was fairly cautious in dealing with these two.

"Us?" The two sturdily-built men exchanged glances, and then forced out awkward smiles towards Linley. One of them, a one-eyed bald man, said apologetically, "We don't have any bad intentions. Only, the core regions of the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts are too dangerous. We two brothers... would like to travel with you, friend. That way, we can help each other out. Wouldn't that be safer?"

The other bald man started momentarily, then quickly nodded repeatedly. "Right. The core region is very dangerous. If we travel together, we can help each other out. How about this? Once we all leave the core regions and leave the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, we'll go our own ways."

"Not interested."

Linley frowned. Turning back, he continued on his journey forward.

Linley wasn't that easily fooled youngster of the past. He could tell that these

two were clearly lying. Helping each other out in the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts? What a joke. These two people definitely didn't have any good intentions in wanting to travel with him. Linley didn't want to cause any trouble, and couldn't be bothered to kill these two either. Naturally, he wouldn't want them to travel with him.

Seeing how bluntly Linley refused and continued on his journey, these two bald men glanced at each other. Hesitating only slightly, they immediately rushed over again.

"Wait, friend, please wait." The two bald men caught up again.

Linley couldn't help but frown as he turned his head to stare coldly at these two.

The two men looked awkwardly at Linley. The one-eyed man said apologetically, "I'm so very sorry, but we two really would like to travel alongside you. Don't worry, once we leave this place, we'll definitely show gratitude to you."

Linley glanced at each man.

"If you want to follow, then follow," Linley said calmly.

After having been in the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts for so long, Linley was quite experienced now. If these two insisted on travelling with him, then let them. Linley was confident in his own ability to deal with them. After all, Linley had Bebe with him as well, on his shoulders.

"Thank you, thank you," Those two bald men said gratefully.

Immediately, those two moved together to walk alongside Linley. At the same time, they constantly scanned the area around them, a hint of dread in their eyes.

"Friend, we hail from the O'Brien Empire's southwest district administrative province. Where are you from?" The one-eyed bald man seemed to want to have more friendly relations with Linley.

Linley's eyebrows twitched.

The O'Brien Empire?

Linley knew very well that if he were to cut directly through the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, he would be able to arrive in the territory of the O'Brien Empire quite quickly.

"Why so many questions?" Linley glanced at the man. "If you want to follow, then follow. Don't make a sound."

"Alright, alright." The one-eyed bald man nodded repeatedly.

They could tell that Linley definitely was no ordinary person. It wasn't too strange for him to be only wearing hemp cloth pants in the winter, but what was quite amazing was that a human in the core region of the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts could be so calm and unhurried.

It was as though this dangerous region was nothing more than a flower garden to him.

"Big brother." The bald man pulled at the arm of the other, one-eyed bald man. In a low voice, he said, "Big brother, do you think we'll be able to preserve our lives?"

The one-eyed bald man looked at their surroundings in fear, then said in a low voice, "Don't over-think things. For now, let's follow this mysterious fellow. If we follow him, we might have a chance."

"Right." The first bald man nodded. But in his heart, he still felt fearful.

Up ahead in front of them, Linley was walking very naturally. Linley noticed that the two men behind him were whispering, but Linley had a feeling that these two men were not the type to try and act against him.

After a while, Linley took a rest.

Each day, Linley would only travel ten kilometers. The rest of his time was spent in training. The two men behind him became truly frantic when Linley rested so soon.

"Why have you stopped?" the one-eyed bald man asked frantically.

"Hrm?" Linley glanced unhappily at the two men.

The younger man hurriedly laughed. "Milord, this is still the core regions. Wouldn't it be better for us to hurry out of the core regions before resting?"

Linley frowned, then spoke. "Don't annoy me. If you want to follow me, then follow. If you want to go, then go. As for me, if I want to stop, I'll stop. If you keep kicking up such a fuss, then don't blame me if I kill you both."

The two bald men exchanged glances, then laughed awkwardly.

"Sorry, sorry."

The two immediately retreated slightly, no longer daring to disturb Linley.

"These two are acting in a strange way." Linley glanced at these two men. These two men said that they wanted to leave the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, but they insisted on following him. If he didn't leave, they wouldn't leave either.

Why did they insist on following him?

He didn't know these two men at all.

Linley sat down cross-legged, placing the adamantine heavy sword across his legs. But just at this moment, Linley suddenly felt a tinge of fear in his heart...

"Swish!"

Linley suddenly turned his head. A black shadow suddenly flashed in front of him, then disappeared.

"Ah! Ah!" From far away, a terrified cry could be heard, but after two or three cries, it fell silent. Only now did Linley realize that of the two bald men, only one was left now. The one remaining was the one-eyed bald man. As for his younger brother, the man was gone now. Next to the man, there was a pool of blood.

"Ah! Ah! No, no!" The one-eyed bald man seemed to have suffered some sort of unspeakable shock, as he began to scream.

Linley solemnly rose to his feet, and Bebe began to grow cautious as well.

"Boss, that creature is extremely fast!" Bebe mentally spoke solemnly. "We've been in the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts for a very long time. This is the fastest creature we've encountered yet. I couldn't even clearly see if it was a man or a magical beast."

Linley hadn't been able to see it clearly either.

That creature's speed was simply too fast. In terms of movement speed, it was even a bit faster than Bebe.

"What exactly was that? Bebe has entered the ninth rank now, and we have spent quite some time here in the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts. But in terms of speed, we've never met anything that was faster than Bebe." Linley began to feel suspicious.

Bebe's speed was his greatest strength.

It was hard to find a magical beast able to outspeed Bebe, even amongst the ninth rank.

"What was that strange creature? Could it have been a Saint-level creature?" Linley felt a slight shock. Saint-level magical beasts would naturally be fast. It would make sense for it to be faster than Linley.

Linley immediately turned his head to stare at the one-eyed bald man.

Right now, the eyes of the one-eyed bald man were filled with fear, and his mouth was continuously muttering something. Every so often, he would look around in fear, as though in terror of being attacked again.

"Ah!!!" Feeling himself being grabbed, the one-eyed bald man couldn't help but scream in terror.

But when he came to his senses and looked behind himself, he saw that it was Linley who had grabbed him by his clothes.

"Speak. What is going on." Linley stared at him accusingly. "Otherwise, I'll abandon you here and travel by myself."

"No, no, don't abandon me." The one-eyed bald man directly fell to his knees. "I'll talk. I'll talk."

Seeing this, Linley couldn't help but frown.

He had heard long ago that the O'Brien Empire was a major military power. The people of the O'Brien Empire deeply venerated the War God, and thus many of the citizens of the empire would train in the path of the warrior. Powerful warriors were extremely proud. For this bald man to be able to enter the core region of the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, he clearly wasn't



weak either. Even if he wasn't a warrior of the seventh rank, he must be a warrior of the sixth rank at least.

But the one-eyed bald man had just fallen to his knees, showing no spine at all.

"Milord, you don't know how terrible these recent days have been. They've, they've been like a terrible, terrible dream." The one-eyed bald man's eyes were beginning to fill with tears.

Linley immediately began to listen closely.

"This time, myself, my younger brother, my wife, and a group of friends formed a squad to enter the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts and begin our training. We hoped to acquire some magicite cores as well. To people like us, who had entered the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts for more than five times, this was an ordinary trip. But we didn't expect..."

The bald man's entire body was trembling. "On the third day after we entered the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, just as we entered the inner regions, we entered a nightmare."

"This squad of mine had six warriors of the seventh rank, and two magi of the sixth rank. As long as we stayed within the inner regions of the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, there shouldn't have been any danger. But who would've thought... that we would encounter a terrifying monster."

"Monster?" Linley frowned.

"The first time we encountered it, it immediately ambushed us, killing one of my good friends, just like how it acted just now." The one-eyed bald man's entire body was shaking. "I was furious, because this monster was simply too fast. We couldn't even tell what it looked like. Only after hearing our friend's miserable cries did we know that we were under attack. And then, seeing the blood on the ground, we realized that our friend was most likely dead."

"At the time, we all believed that magical beast was only able to attack from ambush, and didn't dare to face us directly. Clearly, it wasn't that strong. In our fury, we even thought about killing it to gain vengeance. But at first, we couldn't find the monster."

The one-eyed bald man took a deep breath, calming his agitated heart before continuing. “But that very night, shortly after we finished dinner, the monster came again.” As he spoke, the lone eye of the man opened wide. Clearly he was very nervous.

“This time, like the previous time, that monster ambushed and carried off one of our magi. But this time, it carried the magus only a few dozen meters away before beginning to eat him. Right in front of us, the monster began eating our squad’s magus.”

“What did this monster look like?” Linley immediately asked.

“It looked like a panther whose body was almost totally pitch black,” the one-eyed bald man said.

“Totally pitch black body? The eighth-ranked magical beast, Blackstripe Panther?” But saying this, Linley found that he didn’t believe it. A magical beast of the eighth rank couldn’t possibly reach such an astonishing speed. Not even a panther, a land-based magical beast of incredible speed.

“It wasn’t a Blackstripe Panther. Our squad was fairly experienced, and we know that Blackstripe Panthers are covered in extremely dense straight black stripes, while this monster’s body was covered in curved black stripes that looked like a decorative pattern.”

## The Mysterious Black Panther

Linley was beginning to frown.

He, too, had never heard of such a creature. There were several types of panther-type magical beasts, but one that was entirely pitch-black and covered with dense black wavy lines, which formed decorative patterns, was totally unheard of.

Generally speaking, creatures that one had never heard of must not be underestimated.

The one-eyed bald man said, "That monster decided to eat the meat on the face and the legs of our magus right in front of us, one large bite at a time. Watching this, we were all furious, and we instantly charged forward to attack it.

"However..."

The bald man shook his head. "What we didn't expect was that the monster was far too powerful. We originally thought that the reason it attacked from ambush, then slipped away was because it was weak. However... when our entire group attacked it, it only heavily wounded us."

"Heavily wounded?" Linley questioned suspiciously.

"Right," The one-eyed bald man said in fear and anger. "That monster definitely was capable of killing us all, but it didn't. It only heavily wounded us.

"We originally thought that we still had a chance of living, only to find that the monster was focused on us now. Each day, it would take away two of our people. Sometimes, it would take them away, while other times, it would just eat our friends not too far away from us."

Linley's heart trembled.

He knew that magical beasts were highly intelligent. The magical beast that

this one-eyed bald man had encountered clearly was extremely powerful and extremely intelligent. Most likely, this magical beast was a perverted creature.

“We wanted to flee back, but each time we tried to head away from and out of the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, that monster would come again and heavily injure us again.”

That one-eyed bald man laughed bitterly. “We simply weren’t capable of escaping the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts. Each day, that monster would come and take away one or two people. In the blink of an eye, our twelve person squad only had six left.”

“Having already seen this happen several times, my wife finally broke down mentally when the monster once again began to eat our friends in front of us. She begged me. Begged me to kill her.”

The one-eyed bald man laughed bitterly. “You have no idea the terror we felt after those three days. All of us were at the point of collapse. My wife was fairly weak, even weaker than me. Faced with this terrible choice, in the end, I finally made the choice to put my wife out of her misery.”

“You killed your wife?” Linley frowned.

“Yes. I killed her with my own hands,” The one-eyed bald man said painfully. “But the very day I killed my wife, we encountered several other people, one of whom was a major figure in our Southwest Administrative Province. A combatant of the ninth rank named Pruitt.”

“We had been at the brink of despair and collapse. I killed my own wife, but right afterwards, a combatant of the ninth rank appeared. How do you think I felt?”

The one-eyed bald man’s entire body was shaking. “I almost went mad. Truly. I almost killed myself, I was in such pain.”

Linley could totally imagine how, when overcome by despair and mentally broken down, one would personally kill one’s wife, so as to not allow one’s wife to suffer the fate of being eaten alive, one bite at a time. But then, after killing one’s wife, a combatant of the ninth rank appeared?

This sort of contrast was definitely capable of driving someone insane.

“I was filled with pain, but my other friends were very happy, because they knew that we now had a chance. A combatant of the ninth rank! That was someone whom only the Saint level would surpass. We told our story to him, and Lord Pruitt immediately promised to dispose of this beast for us.”

“When that monster once more came for us, Lord Pruitt immediately made his move.” A strange expression was on the face of that one-eyed bald man. “Just one blow. The monster took a blow from Lord Pruitt head on, then smashed Lord Pruitt’s head open with a blow from its paws.”

Linley’s heart shook.

It was actually able to take a blow from a combatant of the ninth rank head on? Its speed and defense were both incredibly terrifying. A monster like this definitely couldn’t be underestimated.

“This time, the monster was extremely excited. Right before our very eyes, it suddenly transformed, increasing in size from two meters tall to nearly five meters tall and ten meters long. It devoured Lord Pruitt with one gulp,” the one-eyed bald man said in terror.

The look on Linley’s face changed.

“Able to change its size?” Linley was truly shocked.

All Saint-level magical beasts were capable of changing their size. They could easily make themselves much larger or much smaller. But of course, a very small number of magical beasts of the ninth rank with extremely high natural talent could do this as well.

For example, Bebe was capable of changing his size slightly.

In other words...

This magical beast was either a Saint-level magical beast, or an extremely talented magical beast of the ninth rank.

“It wouldn’t be a Saint-level, would it?” Linley’s heart was somewhat unsettled. Although Linley was very self-confident, he still didn’t have any hopes of dealing with a Saint-level magical beast at all.

That one-eyed bald man laughed painfully. “Just like that, the monster

continued to torment us, eating two of us each day. In the end, only my younger brother and I were left. We continued to flee along the core regions, hoping in vain that this monster would engage in battle with some other powerful magical beast, giving us a chance to flee. But clearly, no magical beasts were capable of stopping that monster.”

Linley nodded.

He now totally understood.

But this one-eyed bald man didn't have any good intentions towards Linley, insisting on following Linley. Clearly, this was out of the hopes that Linley would protect him. Acting like this showed that this man didn't care about whether Linley lived or died at all.

The expression on Linley's face grew hard.

“Milord, I... I had no other choices.” The one-eyed bald man knew what Linley was thinking. He hurriedly said, “I have kids. My second brother had kids as well. We didn't want to die.”

“Do you think I want to die?” Linley said coldly.

Just based on what that one-eyed bald man had said, Linley had a general sense of how powerful this monster was.

It was faster than Bebe, and wasn't hurt from a sword blow from a combatant of the ninth rank.

Just based on these two points, Linley couldn't help but feel nervous. What's more, that was only the power that had been revealed. What was the true level of power possessed by this monster?

Was it a Saint-level magical beast?

Linley couldn't be certain. If it was a Saint-level of magical beast, then even if he and Bebe joined forces, they still wouldn't be a match at all.

“You didn't want to die, so you pulled us under water as well?” Linley felt extremely dissatisfied.

“Bebe, let's go.”

Linley immediately sped up his footsteps, heading forward. The one-eyed bald man continued to follow Linley. Linley couldn't help but turn his head and stare at him coldly.

This bastard was still following?

Clearly, that monster had its mind set on that one-eyed bald man.

"Milord, you... please save me." The one-eyed bald man's eyes were filled with a beseeching look.

But his actions only made Linley dislike him more and more. This man was selfish, only caring about himself. He didn't care about others at all.

"Even a ninth rank combatant died. Do you think I'm a Saint-level combatant?" Linley suddenly drew the adamantine heavy sword from his back, and the one-eyed bald man was frightened into beating a hasty retreat.

"If you continue to follow me, then don't blame me for being merciless to you," Linley said coldly.

Linley was now a peak-stage warrior of the seventh rank, and a middle-stage warrior of the ninth rank in Dragonform. Although he was somewhat more powerful than when he was in Hess City, in Hess City, Linley was only capable of fighting that warrior of the ninth rank, Kaiser, to a draw.

Right now, it would be very difficult for Linley to be able to kill a combatant of the ninth rank in one blow.

But that monster had easily done just that, killing a ninth-ranked combatant.

Risking his own life for a person he didn't even know? Was that worth it?

Linley returned his adamantine heavy sword to its sheath, then left by himself. The one-eyed bald man just stood there, not daring to follow. He only stared with despair and hatred at Linley's back.

"Ah!!!"

After walking less than a hundred meters, an agonized scream came from behind him. Linley immediately turned to look back.

On the snow ground, there was a black panther that was two meters tall and

nearly four meters long. The black panther had, in its maws, the body of that one-eyed bald man.

“Save... save me!” The one-eyed bald man was still alive.

Linley’s attention was totally focused on the black panther. The black panther’s body was covered with a large number of wavy, patterned lines. It was quite beautiful, actually. And right now, that black panther’s cold eyes were currently looking at Linley with curiosity.

Clearly...

The black panther was playing a game. The previous game had just come to an end, and now, Linley had become the next victim in its game.

“Save me!” The one-eyed bald man stared at Linley, begging Linley with his eyes.

But that black panther just bit down viciously. With a crunching sound, half of the one-eyed bald man’s waist was bitten off, and his intestines began to slide out. The one-eyed bald man spasmed on the ground a few times, not dying right away.

The black panther walked forward gracefully, stepping on the one-eyed bald man’s chest with its sharp paws.

“CRUNCH!”

The one-eyed bald man’s chest caved in, and seconds later he stopped moving.

The black panther looked at Linley with interest, and then it began to slowly, gracefully move towards Linley. It must be said that its graceful stride was indeed quite beautiful to behold.

“Bebe. Prepare to ambush him. This time, we’re going all out.” Linley could tell that this unidentifiable panther-type magical beast now had its eyes set on him. Instead of allowing this creature to ambush him as it pleased, it was better to engage it head on.

Linley drew the adamantine heavy sword from its sheath, staring at the black panther.



“Hmph.” Linley’s body began to transform. Cold, sharp horns erupted from his forehead, while black scales quickly covered his entire body. That sturdy tail erupted from behind him as well, and his knees, elbows, and spine became lined with sharp spikes.

In the blink of an eye, Linley had totally Dragonformed.

The black panther, seeing this human suddenly transform into a strange, human-shaped aberration, couldn’t help but be startled. Its sleek, glossy hair immediately rose up in caution.

One was a Dragonblood Warrior.

The other, a mysterious panther-type magical beast.

“Come.” Wielding the adamantine heavy sword in his hands, Linley didn’t move at all, just standing there on the snowy ground. As stable and unmoving as a mountain.

The black panther’s body began to crouch down slightly. It was gathering its power!

“Whoosh!”

His dark golden eyes locked onto the black panther, this time Linley was just barely able to see the black panther’s movements. In the blink of an eye, the black panther had crossed the hundred meters distance between them and arrived in front of him.

“WHAP!”

Moving as fast as lightning, Linley’s draconic tail swung at the black panther’s body. In terms of speed, the attack speed of Linley’s tail was actually much faster than the black panther’s movement speed.

The black panther was knocked back over ten meters onto the snowy ground.

But immediately upon landing, the black panther let out a deep growl as it stared at Linley with its cold eyes. This time, the creature was clearly going to attack at full power. With a leap, the black panther charged at incredible speed, so fast as to make one’s heart tremble.

Linley could clearly tell that there wasn’t a single hint of blood on the black

panther's body.

The draconic tail of a middle-stage Dragonblood Warrior of the ninth rank wasn't able to injure it at all.

Linley's adamantine heavy sword swung downwards, chopping as fast as lightning. Black light seemed to flow off the blade of the adamantine heavy sword. The black panther actually dared to swing a paw to directly claw at Linley's adamantine heavy sword.

"CLANG!" Linley's adamantine heavy sword was actually deflected to the side by the black panther's paw.

"Slash!"

The other paw slashed against Linley's arm. On the black scales covering Linley's arm, a rather deep scratch could be seen, and two scales had been split open as well.

The man and the magical beast had each exchanged a blow. They immediately separated.

"Growl... growl..." Standing in the middle of the snow, the black panther stared coldly at Linley. He now saw Linley as a serious opponent. Just now, his attack hadn't been able to totally rip apart that scaled defense and tear off Linley's arm. This made the black panther very surprised.

Linley stared at the damage done to his scaly armor.

Most magical beasts of the ninth rank were not capable of breaching Linley's defense. But just now, that panther had been able to rip two scales apart.

The black panther's body suddenly increased in size, transforming from two meters tall to five, and lengthening to ten meters as well. That black tail of the panther was waving around like a whip. The panther continued to stare coldly at Linley.

"Growl..."

This enormous creature once again charged towards Linley.

## Another Transformation

**“Boss,”** Bebe’s voice rang out in Linley’s mind.

Holding the adamantine heavy sword with one hand, Linley leapt backwards in an arcing dodging pattern. At the same time, he mentally said, “Bebe, don’t panic. Let me first have a good fight with this mysterious black panther. If I can’t beat it, you can make your move against it. You are my secret weapon.”

Bebe, understanding, rapidly retreated to one side.

Right now, Linley had been filled with a growing urge to do battle. Despite having spent this much time in the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, he hadn’t yet encountered an opponent who required him to truly use all of his power. Saint-level beasts were too powerful, while Linley could now totally dominate ordinary magical beasts of the ninth rank through his higher speed.

Only, this mysterious black panther was even faster than Linley.

“Growl!” The enormous black panther landed on the ground, its cold gaze fixed upon Linley.

But Linley only had a hint of a smile on his lips.

“It increased in size, but no doubt its speed is now slower.” Linley could clearly tell that this black panther’s speed had dropped by 20% to 30% just now. With the support of the wind-style Supersonic spell, Linley was totally confident in his ability to deal with it.

But Linley also understood something.

With greater size came lesser speed... but most likely, the black panther’s offensive abilities had just greatly increased. Even in its normal form, the black panther had been able to rip open two of Linley’s scales. Linley no longer dared to allow the black panther to land any more claw attacks against him.

With a ‘swish’, that mysterious black panther once more pounced towards

Linley at high speed, arriving in front of Linley in mere moments.

“Whoosh.”

Right at this moment, Linley suddenly slid down on the snow beneath the black panther, passing below it while simultaneously stabbing at the black panther’s chest with his adamantine heavy sword.

“CLANG!”

Linley’s heavy sword once again slammed against the sharp claws of the panther. Although the black panther’s speed had decreased with its increased size, the attack speed of its paw strikes was still astonishingly fast.

“Swish!” That seven-or eight-meter-long black panther tail ripped through the air, viciously slashing towards Linley.

Linley kicked off powerfully against the ground with his right foot, launching himself towards an enormous nearby tree. As he arrived, Linley kicked viciously against the massive tree with both legs.

“CRACK!” The tree was broken in half and fell down, while its dense array of branches also smashed everywhere.

With astonishing speed, Linley used the bounce-back force to dive back towards the mysterious black panther, while at the same time, gripping the adamantine heavy sword with both hands in a vicious downward stroke against the black panther.

“Slash!” The adamantine heavy sword moved so fast that it ripped through the air, creating an ear-piercing, howling sound.

But right at this moment, the black panther turned its head to stare at Linley, staying there without moving, allowing Linley to strike it at will. Clearly, this black panther understood that after having transformed to a larger size, it would no longer be able to rely on its speed to suppress Linley.

“Swish!”

The adamantine heavy sword in Linley’s hands suddenly seemed to lose all weight and force, floating gracefully downwards at an astonishing speed. The tip of the sword, however, was beginning to tremble.

“Bam.” The adamantine heavy sword collided against the black panther’s body.

A look of surprise appeared in the cold, arrogant eyes of the black panther, because this sword blow seemed to have no force behind it at all. Without hesitating in the slightest, it sent its seven-or eight-meter-long tail slashing fiercely towards Linley.

“Thunderbolt.” Linley’s formerly calm eyes suddenly seemed to spit lightning bolts.

The black panther suddenly felt as though that adamantine heavy sword which had just touched its back suddenly exploded with a terrifyingly powerful blast of force. The force was like the eruption of a volcano, blasting out power wildly and at high speed.

“BAM!”

The black panther felt its limbs grow soft, and its body was pressed down by a significant amount. Its glossy black fur suddenly began to ripple like the waves of the sea.

“Growl!!!!” A small amount of blood leaked out from the corner of the black panther’s mouth.

This level of ‘wielding something heavy as though it were light’ required perfect coordination between physical strength and battle-qi. It wasn’t just raw, brute force; rather, it was concentrating all of the rushing power and unleashing it in one blow. Although the black panther possessed astonishing defensive capabilities, with its fur neutralizing more than half of the offensive power, a significant amount of power still entered its body, causing the black panther some internal injuries.

“Whap!”

That whip-like black tail of the black panther landed viciously on Linley’s body, smashing apart the armored scales on Linley’s waist and sending Linley flying.

Just as Linley was about to smash into the top part of the trunk of another large tree, Linley suddenly stretched out his right hand and plunged his claws into the tree trunk like a grappling hook. Hanging onto the trunk, Linley looked

down from his position at the upper trunk of the tree.

“As I thought. Once it transforms to a large size, its offensive power increases greatly.” Linley looked at the shattered scales on his waist and the fresh blood leaking from beneath it. He now understood much more about this mysterious black panther. “As for its defense, however, it didn’t increase that much.”

When it transformed to a larger size, the black panther’s defense didn’t change much. Its speed dropped, and its attack power increased.

“It seems as though my ‘Thunderbolt’ technique is still effective against it.” Linley was very satisfied with the effect of his ‘Thunderbolt’ attack.

This black panther possessed a terrifyingly powerful defense. Even the explosive power unleashed by ‘Thunderbolt’ was largely blocked by its extremely tough black fur, and the fur itself seemed to be totally undamaged.

If Linley were only to use raw, brute force and battle-qi against this black panther, he probably wouldn’t be able to wound it at all.

“Time to use my magic.”

Linley began to mumble the words to a magical incantation. Right now, Linley was hanging around thirty or so meters up above the ground off that tree trunk, while the black panther was staring up at him coldly from below. Seeing that Linley didn’t come down, this peak-stage, highly intelligent magical beast of the ninth rank, came to a snap decision.

If you aren’t coming down, I’m coming up!

“Swoosh!” That five-meter-tall, enormous black panther suddenly flew into the air, leaping directly towards Linley. With its astonishing springing force, it cleared thirty meters with a single bound.

Linley’s heart was as tranquil as water.

Despite seeing the enormous black panther fly upwards towards himself, he still continued to chant the words to his spell. Only, he slapped the trunk of the tree with his right hand, sending himself flying upwards at an incline at high speed.

The tree that Linley had just slapped instantly split apart by the force of that

blow.

“Crash!” The tree toppled to the ground towards the panther.

This tree was enormous enough that when it was falling, it took up half of the available space. To the physically small Linley, it didn’t prove a problem at all, but the enormous panther was forced to slash at it with its paws and rip it in half.

Seizing this moment, Linley finally completed the magical incantation he was chanting.

“Swiiish.” On Linley’s back, a pair of translucent, blue wings suddenly appeared. Flashing with azure light, the translucent wings seemed extremely beautiful. With a gentle flap of the wings, Linley’s body rocketed into the air.

Wind spell of the eighth rank – Airwings!

Seeing this, the enormous black panther instantly howled with fury. It actually pounced once more towards Linley at high speeds, as Linley flew higher.

“Bam!” Although the black panther had increased in size, it was still extremely dexterous and agile, capable of leaping dozens of meters at a single bound. Borrowing force against the tree trunk, it continued to leap higher and higher up the trees.

But after five or six leaps, the enormous black panther had reached the top of the tallest tree, while right now, Linley flew high above the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts with his translucent wings.

“Now, time for me to thrash you.” Linley saw that the enormous black panther had already leapt towards him from the top of the tallest tree. But now, with nothing to grab on, the black panther had no choice but to allow its body to fall down.

Just as its body began to fall...

“Whoosh!” Linley suddenly spread his wings and rocketed downwards at an astonishing speed.

Through using the astonishing downwards speed granted to him by the Airwings spell, Linley quickly arrived next to the falling enormous black panther.

The enormous black panther glared angrily at Linley, but in mid-air, it had nothing to latch onto.

“Haaaaaaaargh!” Linley suddenly activated all of the Dragonblood battle-qi in his body.

Reaching the absolute maximum limit of Dragonblood battle-qi power in an instant, and with both hands gripped tightly around the adamantine heavy sword, Linley delivered a vicious mid-air chop against the falling black panther, which had nowhere to dodge.

“CLANG!” The black panther’s sharp claws once again clashed against the adamantine heavy sword.

But Linley only confidently swung his adamantine heavy sword against it again at high speed. At this moment, the dancing adamantine heavy sword in Linley’s hands had seemed to become one with the wind, slashing down more than ten times against the falling black panther in the space of one second.

With each sword blow, he executed the ‘Thunderbolt’ technique.

“Bam!” “Bam!”

After blocking the very first strike, the black panther’s body had begun to accelerate its downward falling speed. But using his Airwings spell, Linley was still able to match the black panther’s rate of descent. One sword, then another, then another...

The black panther felt as though each sword stroke of Linley’s was more forceful and heavier than the last, and each sword stroke unleashed the same explosive, flood-like burst of power, causing its internal organs to shake.

After taking over ten blows, the body of the enormous black panther was smashed all the way into the ground by Linley.

“BOOM!”

An enormous crater appeared, and cracks appeared in every direction on the ground. The roots of the massive trees around them began to emerge from the ground, uprooted from the force of this collision.

In the middle of the crater, the enormous black panther spat out a large



mouthful of fresh blood, and even a hint of blood could be seen coming out of its fur. These repeated blows by Linley's heavy sword had caused even the black panther's fur to be unable to withstand all of the attack force.

"Black panther." Linley stood in midair, over ten meters above it. His translucent wings fluttered. "I know that you understand the human tongue. I'll give you a chance. As long as you submit to me, I'll spare your life."

Right now, Linley really wanted to tame and acquire this magical beast.

Linley had been in sore need of a good mount this entire time. And, even more importantly, this black panther was an extremely superior creature, especially after it transformed in size. Its enormous, two-story-tall body, combined with its astonishing speed and defense made it an absolute war machine.

"Growl!"

The enormous black panther stood up, staring coldly at Linley. Its deadly eyes were filled with boundless wrath. Its head was still raised proudly. How could it possibly submit so easily? But right now, the black panther understood that this human warrior in front of it wasn't the prey it had thought he was. For a warrior to possess such terrifying power and also be able to use a high-level wind spell such as 'Airwings' was an expert which was extremely rare in the human world.

"Are you willing to submit?" Linley shouted from up high.

As far as magical beasts were concerned, only martial force could make them submit and subdue them. And the higher the rank of a magical beast, the more difficult it was to make them submit.

"Groooowl!" The enormous black panther let out an angry roar.

"If you won't submit, then I'll beat you until you do!" Linley was very confident.

When combining his magic with his warrior abilities, his power could rise to an astonishing level. Right now, due to the pair of translucent Airwings on his back, Linley was in total control of the battlefield.

"Swish!" Linley once more dived downwards.

The movement speed of the pair of translucent wings was higher than what four limbs provided. In the blink of an eye, Linley appeared in front of the enormous black panther as he once more smashed downwards viciously against it with his adamantine heavy sword.

But the black panther only retreated over ten meters at high speed, then pounced forward again.

Flexing his translucent wings, Linley began to dodge about very agilely in the air while constantly chopping downwards with his adamantine heavy sword. Every sword carried with it a terrifying force, capable of flattening a hill.

“Bam!”

The enormous black panther’s body was once more struck by the adamantine heavy sword and knocked flying. Blood had matted its glossy black fur with a red color. Linley stood confidently in midair, ready to strike another blow at the black panther at any moment with his adamantine heavy sword.

“Will you submit?” Linley asked in a solemn voice.

The black panther once more rose to its feet, staring coldly at Linley. Suddenly... the black panther’s body began to shrink. It once more shrunk down to a height of two meters and a length of four meters... but the strange thing was, this time, the black panther’s entire body began to glow with a hazy black and white light.

“What on earth?” Sensing danger, Linley quickly flew a bit higher using his translucent wings, cautiously staring down.

That black and white light disappeared. The black panther’s body, previously covered with a large, dense amount of black stripes, now only had a few thick black stripes on its upper body, while the fur on its four limbs had turned as white as snow.

Seeing this, Linley sucked in a cold breath. “Blackcloud Panther? The legendary Blackcloud Panther?”

## A Battle of Speed

The most powerful panther-type magical beast would probably be the Saint-level magical beast, “Electrobolt Panther”, a lightning-type magical beast. It was so incredibly fast that other Saint-level beasts simply couldn’t compare to it.

But the most secretive, most mysterious panther-type magical beast would be the ninth-ranked magical beast, ‘Blackcloud Panther’.

According to records, the last time a Blackcloud Panther appeared was over a thousand years ago. Despite so many years having passed, the amount of information which people had managed to collect regarding Blackcloud Panthers remained very scarce.

Blackcloud Panthers were magical beasts of the ninth rank, and extremely fast. Their bodies were covered with just a few black stripes, but their four limbs were snow white, as though they were travelling within a cloud. This was why people gave them the name, ‘Blackcloud Panthers’.

But with regards to what special abilities the Blackcloud Panthers had, or what element they were, the records had no information.

“Most likely, all of the experts who encountered Blackcloud Panthers lost their lives. As for those Saint-level combatants who knew the truth about Blackcloud Panthers, perhaps they intentionally did not reveal any information.” Linley knew very well that many of the more powerful organizations held secrets that were closely guarded. Even spells of the seventh rank would not be revealed. From this, one could imagine how secretive these organizations were.



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Within this densely-forested area in the core region of the Mountain Range of

Magical Beasts, the Blackcloud Panther was exchanging stares with Linley, who was floating in mid-air with translucent wings on his back.

“Blackcloud Panthers can change their size as well as their appearances. They truly are quite mysterious.” Linley didn’t dare to relax at all.

The Blackcloud Panther stared coldly at Linley, its icy eyes filled with fury.

“Swish!”

In the blink of an eye, the Blackcloud Panther crossed the fifty-meter-gap between itself and Linley. Compared to before, when it was in its first form (normal size and covered with wavy black stripes), it was almost 50% faster.

50%!

For its speed to increase by that much prevented Linley from being able to dodge, and the Blackcloud Panther landed a vicious blow against Linley’s chest. Immediately, the scales on his chest shattered. “Crack!” With a cracking sound, fresh blood leaked out from behind the scales.

“Whoosh.” Linley immediately activated his translucent wings, rapidly rising higher into the air.

“What incredible speed.” Linley felt shocked in his heart.

The Blackcloud Panther, in its first form, was slightly faster than Bebe. In its second form, the large form, the speed of the Blackcloud Panther decreased by 30%, roughly on par with Linley. In its third form, the one it was in right now, it was 50% faster than the original form.

At its current speed, it could cross a hundred meters in the blink of an eye.

How utterly terrifying!

“Grooowl.” The Blackcloud Panther raised its head to look up at Linley, its eyes filled with arrogance.

Linley slowly flapped his translucent wings, but didn’t descend yet, merely hovering. Linley knew very well that once he descended, he would find it very difficult to deal with the Blackcloud Panther’s speed.

“Boss, my turn!” Having watched for so long, Bebe could no longer hold

himself back.

“Shkreeeech!”

With a terrifying, high-pitched shriek, Bebe transformed into a ferocious black blur, charging at the Blackcloud Panther. The Blackcloud Panther, which hadn’t paid any attention to Bebe at all, was now shocked by Bebe’s speed.

“Supersonic!” Linley immediately cast this supportive magic spell.

He cast the supportive Supersonic spell directly on Bebe. In the past, Bebe had never encountered any magical beasts of the ninth rank faster than himself. Thus, Linley had never seen the need to cast Supersonic on Bebe. But now, Linley finally did so.

In truth, this Supersonic spell was generally used by magi to increase the power of warriors in their squad.

“Swish!” Aided by a Supersonic spell of the eighth rank, Bebe’s speed instantly increased by 30%.

“Slash!” The Blackcloud Panther clawed at Bebe with its fierce claws.

But with his speed increased 30% by the Supersonic spell, although Bebe was still slightly slower than the Blackcloud Panther, the difference wasn’t too huge. More importantly, Bebe was extremely small and nimble.

Bebe constantly changed the direction he was moving in.

“Shkreeeech!” Bebe suddenly sped up, pouncing towards the Blackcloud Panther. In mid-pounce, Bebe’s body suddenly enlarged, and then Bebe swiped viciously at the Blackcloud Panther with his paws.

Staring coldly at Bebe, the Blackcloud Panther clawed viciously at Bebe with its own paw as well.

“Slash!”

“Slash!”

Both magical beasts landed blows on each other. Bebe’s claw managed to leave a clear mark on the body of the Blackcloud Panther, and fresh blood began to seep out. But although Bebe was knocked flying as well, he just flipped

up to his feet and stood back up, not harmed at all.

“Hrm?” Linley’s eyes turned round in surprise.

“Bebe’s attack power is about on par with mine. So how could Bebe so easily wound it?” Linley was shocked.

Linley knew very well how powerful Bebe’s defense was. After all, when they had been in the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts last time, Bebe was just an early-stage magical beast of the eighth rank, but he could withstand the dying blow of an Armored Razorback Wurm without perishing. Now that Bebe had entered the ninth rank, his terrifyingly strong defense was even more powerful than Linley’s. Linley didn’t find it surprising at all that Bebe was uninjured. But the strange thing was, the defense of the Blackcloud Panther had just dropped.

“Ah! I understand.”

Linley suddenly understood the special characteristics of the three forms of the Blackcloud Panther. The first form was a balanced one in terms of defense, speed, and offense. The second, giant form, prioritized offense at the expense of speed. As for this form, the third one, although it raised speed to an astonishing level, its defense dropped in turn.

Right now, the Blackcloud Panther and Bebe were staring at each other. The Blackcloud Panther could feel that it was bleeding, and it was beginning to worry... because this freak of a magical beast in front of it hadn’t been hurt at all.

“Blackcloud Panther,” Linley said.

The Blackcloud Panther looked up at Linley.

Linley didn’t speak to the Blackcloud Panther as though it were an inferior life form. Rather, Linley spoke to it as he would a creature of equal intelligence. “Blackcloud Panther, in your current form, you should possess great speed but low defense. In this form, you aren’t even able to overcome Bebe.”

“Growl.” The Blackcloud Panther snarled unhappily.

The Blackcloud Panther then stared at Bebe, and from its jaw came a series of strange growls. Bebe was startled for a moment, and then let out an enraged

growl of his own.

“Boss. This Blackcloud Panther can speak the tongue of us rodent-type magical beasts,” Bebe said mentally to Linley.

Linley knew very well that Bebe was born understanding the rodent language. But the languages of other magical beasts were different; each different type of magical beast had their own language.

Some extremely long-lived magical beasts, however, were skilled at communicating using the languages of other types of magical beasts.

This Blackcloud Panther was a peak-stage magical beast of the ninth rank. Not only did it know many languages of other types of magical beasts, it also understood the human tongue. Only, it was unable to reproduce the human sounds due to physical reasons. Only upon reaching the Saint level, when it could begin to alter its body, could it speak the human tongue.

“What did it say?” Linley asked.

Bebe and the Blackcloud Panther engaged in a discussion through growls and angry snarls. Suddenly, Bebe and the Blackcloud Panther seemed to get into an argument, as the fur on both magical beasts stood up straight.

“Growl!!”

“Shkreeech!”

The two magical beasts suddenly began to engage in a wild battle, as their shadows flashed against each other again and again. Fresh blood began to fly everywhere...

Their angry growls unabated, the two magical beasts exchanged blows at high speed, and the trees and boulders nearby suffered the brunt of their fury.

The trees toppled. The boulders shattered.

Every place these two magical beasts crossed through turned into a debris-strewn area.

Suddenly, the two beasts separated again. Bebe hunched down, growling as he stared at the Blackcloud Panther. The Blackcloud Panther stared at Bebe in the same manner, as though facing a fierce opponent.

But the Blackcloud Panther's body was covered in blood.

With its defense lowered, it was unable to resist Bebe's claw attacks. And in terms of speed, boosted by the Supersonic spell, Bebe was only slightly slower than it was.

Bebe growled angrily towards the Blackcloud Panther.

The Blackcloud Panther roared back towards Bebe.

"Boss, this Blackcloud Panther isn't willing to submit. It says that you simply don't have the ability to defeat it on your own," Bebe said mentally to Linley. "Boss, let me kill it."

Right now, the Blackcloud Panther was extremely frustrated.

If it used its first two forms, its speed was inferior to its opponent and it would be trampled. But after increasing its speed by entering its 'wind-style form', its defense was lowered.

The Blackcloud Panther knew that the human opponent was capable of flight.

The speed one could reach flying was definitely greater than the speed one could reach through running on all fours. In terms of short term bursts, it could exceed Linley in speed. But if it were to flee, Bebe and Linley would definitely be able to easily catch up to it.

"Blackcloud Panther, you think I can't beat you?" Linley asked loudly.

The Blackcloud Panther immediately raised its head arrogantly as it looked at Linley. In close quarters combat, the speed boost provided by the translucent wings couldn't be put on full display. It didn't fear Linley at all.

"Fine." Linley nodded.

And then, Linley began to mutter the words to another spell as well, causing the Blackcloud Panther to be suspicious. But as a wind-type magical beast as well, the Blackcloud Panther wasn't afraid of Linley having access to any particularly powerful wind-type spells. In addition, it knew that if it were to flee now, Linley wouldn't be able to catch up to it.

"Thruuumm."



Centered around the body of the Blackcloud Panther, a circular area a hundred meters in circumference suddenly began to glow with a layer of earth elemental essence. These earth elemental essences were throbbing with a certain frequency.

The Blackcloud Panther suddenly felt a terrifyingly powerful gravitational force tug at it, causing it to hunch over. Even the blood inside its body as well as its heart were affected, causing it to feel rather dizzy.

Earth magic – Supergravity Field!

The Supergravity Field created by a magus of the eighth rank was able to increase the local gravity by a factor of eight. This increased gravitational field's effect wasn't as simple as say adding one thousand pounds of weight to a man who already weighed two hundred pounds. The eight-fold gravity also impacted the heart, the spleen, and the other internal organs.

An ordinary person might be able to carry one hundred to two hundred pounds of weight.

But under a double-strength gravitational field, his heart might not be able to stand the pressure and might break down.

After all, although the external muscles were easily trained, it was very hard to train internal organs such as the heart. At the very least, the rate of training the internal organs was much slower than the external muscles.

Suddenly ambushed by a field of eight-fold gravity, the Blackcloud Panther couldn't help but feel dizzy.

Not giving it a chance to recover, Linley, his entire body covered with earth elemental essence, charged in, and began to wildly unleash upon the Blackcloud Panther... vicious punches and kicks!

Yes, he didn't use the adamantine heavy sword!

Only his fists and his feet!

"Growl!" The body of a magical beast of the ninth rank was extremely sturdy, and very soon, it became used to the greater gravity. But under the influence of an eight-fold gravity, it didn't even have half the speed it previously had.

“Swish!” “Swish!”

“Bam!”

A kick landed hard against the Blackcloud Panther’s waist, and then Linley rushed to the opposite side, landing a vicious punch on the Blackcloud Panther’s body and sending it flying back in the other direction.

In ten short seconds, the Blackcloud Panther had been thoroughly ravaged by Linley’s punches and kicks. Its current speed was simply insufficient for escaping the confines of the Supergravity Field. And what’s more, Bebe was watching intently from the side as well.

“Do you submit?”

“Do you submit?”



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While shouting loudly, Linley wildly continued to whale away at it with his fists and feet. Linley was beating this peak-stage magical beast of the ninth rank, the Blackcloud Panther, into a state where it couldn’t resist at all. One mouthful after another of blood was leaking from its mouth.

“Groooooowl!” The Blackcloud Panther suddenly let out a howl of grief and anger.

“Boss. He submits.”

“Bam!” Linley’s fists were moving too fast, and he landed one final punch on the Blackcloud Panther’s skull, smashing it to the ground.

Laughing, Linley looked at the Blackcloud Panther, which was on all fours, pressed against the ground. Under the influence of the eight-fold gravity, the blood flowing through the veins of the Blackcloud Panther had grown sluggish as well. And now, after having been beaten wildly by Linley in such a manner, the Blackcloud Panther had become quite dizzy.

“Do you submit?” Linley laughed as he looked at the Blackcloud Panther.

Although Linley was laughing, under the total Dragonform transformation,

Linley's eyes were still that calm, emotionless dark gold color. And how could one tell that Linley was smiling beneath all of those scales on his face?

The Blackcloud Panther raised his head to look at Linley, paying particular attention to the translucent wings on Linley's back. His heart trembled. He was afraid of being brutalized by Linley yet again. Immediately, it nodded. And in fact, he really had mentally submitted to Linley's display of prowess. For a combatant to be so powerful as a warrior and as a magus was more than enough to force it to submit.

Smiling, Linley immediately began to set up a soul-binding magical array!

## Leaving the Mountains

Virtually all magi knew how to set up a soul-binding magic array. But in terms of actually setting one up, there were certain requirements. Generally speaking, only upon reaching the seventh rank as a magus did one have sufficient spiritual strength to set it up.

A nearly translucent pentagram was floating in mid-air.

And then, the pentagram magic formation flew towards the head of the Blackcloud Panther, who didn't resist at all, allowing the magical formation to enter his mind. Suddenly, both Linley and the Blackcloud Panther could feel that their spirits were now interconnected.

This was not the same as the 'bond of equals' which Linley and Bebe shared.

In the 'bond of equals' between Linley and Bebe, both of their souls had become intermingled. This soul-binding magic array, however, was formed solely from Linley's spiritual energy. When the Blackcloud Panther accepted the soul-binding contract, naturally Linley was the master.

"Master." The Blackcloud Panther was extremely respectful.

Linley looked at the Blackcloud Panther. "What is your name?" Linley knew that some high-class magical beasts had names of their own. For example, that Armored Razorback Wyrms which Linley had encountered in the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts' Foggy Valley had been named Sartius.

The Blackcloud Panther's voice sounded in Linley's mind. "Master, my name is Haeru."

"Haeru?" Linley memorized the name.

"Haeru, tell me about your transformation abilities." Towards this topic, Linley felt quite a bit of interest.

The Blackcloud Panther nodded. "Master, it is because I am a dual-element

magical beast of both darkness and wind elements. In my brain, I have two magicite cores; one is darkness element, the other is wind element. Normally, I am in my first form, where my defense, offense, and speed are all equal.”

“When I rely primarily on the energy from my darkness magicite core, my body will increase in size and my attack power will go up, at the expense of speed. When I rely primarily on the energy from my wind magicite core, I will be in this form, the wind-style form, with great speed but weaker defense,” the Blackcloud Panther, Haeru, said honestly.

Linley now understood.

So Blackcloud Panthers were dual-element magical beasts of wind and darkness, and this current form was the wind-style form. The giant form was the darkness-style form, and only the original form was the ‘normal’ form.

“I had originally thought that Haeru’s current form was his normal form.” Linley snickered to himself.

Linley suspected that the person who had written the records which Linley had read regarding Blackcloud Panthers had only seen this wind-style form, and thus mistook this as the only form of the Blackcloud Panthers.

“Growl!” Bebe ran over, growling in a low voice towards the Blackcloud Panther.

The Blackcloud Panther began to chat with him as well.

“Looks like our journey will be more interesting in the future.” A hint of a smile was on Linley’s face.



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Alongside his two magical beast companions, Bebe and Haeru, Linley continued his daily training regime. Linley immersed himself in the world of sword-training. Every so often, Linley would have some new insights regarding how to use his heavy sword.

Spring left, autumn came.

In the blink of an eye, another year had passed.

That fall in the second year, the temperature had dropped to a murderous low. Linley was seated cross-legged beneath an ancient oak, training. The Dragonblood battle-qi had suddenly begun to boil, causing his blood vessels and his heart to once again begin to change and transform.

In addition, within Linley's dantian, the Dragonblood battle-qi had finally begun to change as well. Excited, Linley let out a laugh. He had finally broken past the late-stage of the seventh rank and reached the eighth rank. He had become a warrior of the eighth rank!

As a warrior of the eighth rank, upon totally Dragonforming, Linley's power was now at the peak-stage of the ninth rank.

There was a significant difference between an early-stage ninth rank warrior and a peak-stage ninth rank warrior.

"When I was in Hess City, it was hard for me to even break past the armor of an ordinary magical beast of the ninth rank. But now, even without using the adamantine heavy sword, I can kill most magical beasts of the ninth rank." Linley was extremely confident.

A peak-stage Dragonblood Warrior of the ninth rank could definitely vanquish a peak-stage magical beast of the ninth rank.

Aside from Saint-levels, perhaps there was nobody in the world who could threaten him anymore.

"Only, the higher level of using this adamantine heavy sword, this so-called 'impose' level... what is it?" Linley began to frown. Right now, Linley had completely mastered the technique of 'wielding something heavy as though it were light'.

He walked barefooted on the ground.

Linley continued on his path of training, constantly harmonizing himself with the pulsing thrum of the earth and the indistinct ebbs and flows of the wind. In turn, Linley's spirit became purified by nature, becoming more agile and graceful.



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Winter arrived.

In the morning, a great blizzard had descended, covering the entire world with blankets of falling snow. Standing in the middle of the snowstorm, Linley stared up at the snowflakes falling from the sky. His heart was very peaceful.

Suddenly, Linley sat down cross-legged, placing the adamantine heavy sword across his lap. His upper body was still bare, and he still wore that ragged pair of hemp cloth pants.

The snow settled on top of Linley's body, but Linley didn't notice it at all.

Time passed. The snow continued to fall from morning until nightfall, covering the entire area with a layer of snow as thick as one's foot.

Bebe and Haeru had hidden themselves underneath a large pine tree, where they watched Linley.

"Impose."

Linley's eyes opened. Within them, there was a hint of a smile. Raising his head to stare in front of him, he saw that the snow had ceased to fall. Although it was almost dark, the entire world had been painted a light white color by the snow.

"Groooooowl!" From far away, the roar of a magical beast could be heard.

A Glacial Snow Lion was striding on the snow. Apparently having discovered Linley, it began to draw close to Linley, one step at a time. Watching the Glacial Snow Lion draw near, Linley didn't seem to react at all.

"Swoosh!" With a mighty leap, the Glacial Snow Lion pounced towards Linley.

Linley watched as the Glacial Snow Lion pounced towards him. Very casually, he grabbed the adamantine heavy sword that had been lying in his lap and chopped directly towards the Glacial Snow Lion.

"Rumble!" The moment Linley swung the adamantine heavy sword, space itself seemed to suddenly be compressed around the area of the sword, in the

direction of the Glacial Snow Lion.

Terrified, the Glacial Snow Lion wished to flee, but the entire area around it was compressed by that pressuring force. It had nowhere to run.

Facing this heavy sword, it had no choice but to take it head on.

“Bam!”

The heavy sword slammed against the Glacial Snow Lion’s body. The Glacial Snow Lion’s entire body trembled momentarily, then suddenly disintegrated into a pile of flesh and blood.

“So ‘impose’ refers to ‘imposing’ one’s will on the heavens and the earth, to the point where even space itself can become used to constrict someone. Haha...” Linley laughed.

After having experienced that huge blizzard, Linley finally entered the third level of wielding heavy weapons; the ‘impose’ level. Only, Linley understood that he had just barely begun to grasp this level.

“To be able to so quickly grasp the ‘impose’ level, I really must give thanks to my training as a stone sculptor as well as my insights as a magus.” Linley felt very happy.

Because he was a magus, Linley’s soul could more clearly sense the throbbing pulse of the earth as well as the flows of the wind. His soul was now capable of becoming one with nature. In addition, this entire time, Linley had been extremely focused on his training and had accumulated a great deal of experience. This allowed Linley to finally surpass that initial barrier and enter the ‘impose’ level of wielding the heavy sword.

In terms of power, the ‘impose’ level was far more terrifying than the level of ‘wielding something heavy as though it were light’. It was also far more profound and mysterious.



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Spring. Year 10003 of the Yulan calendar. The northernmost edge of the



Mountain Range of Magical Beasts was only a few kilometers away from the North Sea. In fact, from the northernmost point of the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, one could see the vast, endless expanse of water known as the North Sea.

Between the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts and the North Sea, there was a corridor which linked the Holy Union and the O'Brien Empire together. Almost every day, large numbers of people passed through this wide road.

Virtually everyone, be it the merchants of the O'Brien Empire, the merchants of the Holy Union, or others, passed through this corridor.

However, the citizens of the O'Brien Empire, when facing the citizens of the Holy Union, felt a sense of natural superiority. This was because the O'Brien Empire was the most powerful empire in the entire Yulan continent. What's more, it possessed the 'War God'. In the war-loving O'Brien Empire, virtually every citizen was proud to belong to the O'Brien Empire.

Right now, on the wide corridor, there was a merchant caravan with hundreds of people that were camping and resting. Many people were currently eating.

"Old Hett."

A young man riding on a carriage chuckled at a chubby man next to him. "You've made a fortune on this latest deal."

"Haha," that middle-aged fatty laughed contentedly. "Petrie, you are a smart young fellow. If you continue to work for me, in three years' time, you'll be able to buy a manor in your hometown, then buy a few beautiful serving maids and hire a few manservants. You'll be able to live a happy life as an estate owner."

"Three years? Shit, in three more years I probably will have lost my life," the youngster swore. "A new person like myself is always assigned the most dangerous tasks. Alas... in one year, I'll go back home, buy a beautiful girl, and enjoy life. Estate owner? That'll depend on whether or not I have that good fortune."

The middle-aged fatty began to laugh. "You are a newcomer. Of course it falls on you to take on the most dangerous tasks. However, that means you get a large share as well. Oh, right. Petrie, this time in our caravan, there's a very

beautiful girl. As we are headed the same way, we are escorting her.”

“Are you talking about Miss Jenne?” The young fellow’s eyes instantly lit up. “If I had a woman like that, I’d be willing to work for ten more years. That figure. That aura. Oh, man...”

“But she clearly is a noble, and that old servant of hers isn’t weak either.” The middle-aged fatty chortled.

“Can’t I at least fantasize?” the youngster asked unhappily.

The middle-aged fatty began to laugh, but then he suddenly looked towards the south. “Hrm? Petrie, look. Someone is coming out from within the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts.” Petrie immediately looked south towards the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts.

Dressed in an ordinary blue warrior’s uniform, a man carrying a heavy sword on his back was walking out from within the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts. His long brown hair just barely reached his shoulders. By the looks of it, he was nearly two meters tall.

By his side was a black panther that was nearly as tall as he was, and on the back of that black panther was a black Shadowmouse.

“What is that black panther?” Petrie said in astonishment.

Staring with wide eyes, the middle-aged man said, “Don’t cause a ruckus! I’ve heard that all panther-type and lion-type magical beasts are very powerful. Generally speaking, they are at least magical beasts of the sixth rank, or even higher.”

Immediately, Petrie no longer dared to make a sound.

Right at this moment, the brown-haired man began jogging towards their caravan with long strides. The caravan guards immediately became alert. The person coming towards them was clearly a powerful warrior.



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Right now, Linley was in an excellent mood. After three full years of hard

training, he had finally left the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts.

“The Northern Sea is indeed vast.” This was the first time Linley had seen the North Sea, and the sight of that enormous, boundless, sky-blue sea stunned Linley, filling him with awe.

Seeing the resting caravan in front of him, Linley jogged in that direction.

“Hey, friend, what do you want?” a heavily bearded guard shouted out loudly. Smiling, Linley replied, “I’m headed for the O’Brien Empire. I hope you can take me along with you.”

The heavily bearded guard looked at Linley, then turned towards a middle-aged, golden-haired man next to him. After exchanging a few words, he said to Linley in a loud voice, “That’s easy. Twenty gold coins, and we’ll take you with us.”

“Fine.” Linley agreed very readily. He immediately pulled out a small sack of gold, counted out twenty gold coins, and handed it over.

This outfit Linley was currently wearing had been stored in the interspatial ring, ready for just an occasion such as this. In his interspatial ring, Linley naturally had prepared quite a few things.

“Hey, friend, since you already have a mount, do you plan to ride in a carriage, or on this panther?” the heavily bearded man asked warmly.

“In a carriage, I suppose,” Linley said.

“Fine. You can go get inside that cart in the back. That one right there, the flat cart with two people in it,” the heavily bearded man pointed as he spoke. Actual covered carriages were rather expensive, and in this caravan, the majority of the soldiers all rode in flat carts.

“Sure.” Linley agreed quite casually.

As he walked over to and reached that flat cart, the two men already in the cart, previously engaged in conversation, were immediately terrified by Haeru, who was walking alongside Linley. Panther-type magical beasts were generally high class magical beasts, after all.

“Ah, friend, please, sit.” The two men were incredibly friendly.

Linley entered the cart. The cart had mattresses made of hay inside, which were covered by a thick cotton cloth. As Linley sat on top of a hay mattress, Bebe jumped right onto Linley's shoulders as well.

"Come, friend, have some wine," the slightly older one of the two men warmly offered.

"Thanks." Linley accepted the wineskin and took a large gulp.

"Hey, everybody, get ready. We're about to start moving again!" A loud voice rang out, and all the people who got off their carriages for a rest immediately got back into their carriages.

The caravan began to move forward again, embarking once more on its journey towards the O'Brien Empire...

## Olivier

Travelling on this seemingly endless, winding road, this caravan with hundreds of people didn't move at too rapid a pace. All of the guards of the caravan maintained a careful eye in the direction of the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts at all times.

There were two major sources of danger on this road. The first was the magical beasts in the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts. The second was bandits. Because this road, which was hundreds of miles long, was controlled by neither the Holy Union nor the O'Brien Empire, there naturally were many bandits here.

"Squeak. Squeak." The carriage wheels squeaked rhythmically, and Linley lay back, enjoying the strong liquor in the wineskin.

"It's been three years since I've touched alcohol. This rough liquor feels even more enjoyable to me than those exquisite wines the Jadewater Paradise used to have." Though he laughed, Linley was sighing in his heart as well. Meanwhile, by his side, Bebe was very enjoyably munching on pieces of roasted meat.

The older of the two soldiers whom Linley was sharing this cart with said, "Friend, my name is Lowndes. This is my younger friend. His name is Luther."

Linley was slightly startled. He understood that these two wished to know his name, but Linley knew that his name was already on the Red List of the Radiant Church as someone who must be killed on sight.

"You can call me 'Ley'," Linley said with a laugh.

"Ley, what level of magical beast is this panther of yours?" that young fellow named Luther immediately asked enthusiastically. "This magical beast's fur is so smooth. Riding on such a magical beast really would be so majestic! I think it must be at least a magical beast of the seventh rank."

“All you need to know is that he is a high-class magical beast,” Linley said casually.

The Blackcloud Panther, Haeru, who had been loping alongside the cart, suddenly fixed Luther with its cold eyes. Seeing Haeru’s gaze, Luther immediately was so frightened that he could only smile weakly in response.

Everyone in the Yulan continent knew that magical beasts possessed intelligence which was no less than that of men. They definitely couldn’t be treated like domesticated household pets. If you tried to, the results would be disastrous.

“The two of you belong to the Holy Union? Or to the O’Brien Empire?” Linley asked.

Linley knew very little regarding the O’Brien Empire.

“We are both from the O’Brien Empire,” Lowndes said with a chortle. “Ley, how about you?”

“This will be my first trip to the O’Brien Empire. I’ve long heard that the O’Brien Empire has a tremendous martial spirit, but have never experienced it for myself,” Linley said calmly.

Both Luther and Lowndes lived by the edges of their blades. They possessed quite good insight, and could easily tell that Linley was an extremely powerful person. After all, in order to be able to subdue a powerful magical beast, one had to be able to completely dominate it with power first. Only then would it submit.

“Ley, we citizens of the O’Brien Empire greatly revere powerful combatants. No matter where you go, you will be received with great courtesy, given your power,” Lowndes said with a chuckle. “Ley, if this is your first time visiting the O’Brien Empire, do you know much about it?”

“Aside from knowing that the O’Brien Empire has seven administrative provinces and knowing about the War God, I don’t know much.” Linley laughed.

As the most militarily powerful of the Four Great Empires, the O’Brien Empire’s territory was also the largest amongst the six major powers. Each of those seven provinces was significantly larger than a kingdom.

“Ley, let me explain. Our empire has a large number of experts. Even combatants of the ninth rank don’t dare to be arrogant in the Imperial Capital. After all, the War God’s College is settled down atop one of the mountains just outside the Imperial Capital,” Lowndes explained enthusiastically.

“The War God’s College?” Linley had no idea what this was.

Next to him, Luther hurriedly said, “Ley, you absolutely must be aware of this. The highest, holiest training site in the entire O’Brien Empire is the War God’s College. Every hundred years or so, or sometimes every few hundred years, the War God will accept a single disciple whom he will personally teach. The number of direct disciples he has is extremely few, but eight or nine out of every ten people whom the War God accepts as a disciple will become a Saint-level combatant.”

Hearing this, Linley was truly stunned.

Previously, he was under the impression that the O’Brien Academy was the most elite training academy in existence, but now, clearly, this War God’s College was far superior to it.

“But it really is too difficult for one to be accepted as a disciple by the War God. Even the honorary disciples whom he doesn’t personally teach will only see one added to their number every two years or so.” Lowndes sighed.

Just one disciple every year or two, and an honorary one at that.

This acceptance rate was even lower by far than that of the Ernst Institute. But one could understand if one thought about it. After all, this had to do with taking the War God as one’s teacher and master. The War God... an entity who had surpassed the Saint level over five thousand years ago.

“Therefore, Ley, in the future, if you meet anyone from the War God’s College, you have to be careful. Even if they decide to kill someone, usually no one will interfere,” Lowndes advised.

Linley understood.

The War God, O’Brien, was the founding Emperor of the O’Brien Empire. Although he had abdicated long ago, his influence in the O’Brien Empire was much higher than the reigning Emperor. The War God O’Brien absolutely was

the backbone and main pillar of the entire O'Brien Empire.

"Right. Have you heard of any geniuses appearing recently in the O'Brien Empire?" Linley suddenly asked. What Linley was thinking was, "The density of dragonblood in the veins of Wharton was even higher than mine, hence he could naturally become a Dragonblood Warrior. His potential should be higher than mine as well. By now, Wharton should be seventeen. He should be very famous in the O'Brien Empire."

Given the speed at which a Dragonblood Warrior trained at...

Generally speaking, in a few decades, they could reach the Saint level. If one trained hard, one would be able to reach the ninth rank within twenty years, and the eighth rank within ten.

Wharton's innate talent definitely should be enough to stun the empire.

"Prodigy? Are you talking about Olivier, the Prodigy Sword Saint?" Lowndes asked.

"The Prodigy Sword Saint, Olivier?" Linley had never heard this name before. "Why is this Olivier known as the Prodigy Sword Saint?"

Next to him, Luther hurriedly said, "Ley, if in the empire, someone hears you say that you don't know who the Prodigy Sword Saint is, they will laugh at you. Do you know how old Lord Olivier was when he reached the Saint level?"

He was a Saint-level combatant?

"How old?" Linley actually was extremely calm. He was a member of the Dragonblood Warrior clan, who generally could reach the Saint level in a few decades. Generally speaking, those so-called Prodigies would still need nearly a century.

"Forty-seven!" Luther said worshipfully. "Lord Olivier was a combatant of the ninth rank by age thirty, and by age forty-seven, entered the Saint level. And three years ago, that year when the Holy Union and the Dark Alliance suffered the 'Apocalypse Day', Olivier entered the Saint level."

Linley nodded slightly.

It seemed as though that cataclysmic day had been dubbed the 'Apocalypse



Day’.

“No wonder I haven’t heard of him.” Linley understood now. When this person’s fame became widespread, Linley had just entered the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts and embarked on his three years of toilsome training.

That Luther clearly worshipped this Prodigy Sword Saint, Olivier. He hurriedly said, “Ley, let me tell you something. When Lord Olivier reached the ninth rank, the War God actively reached out to him and invited him to become his student. But Lord Olivier refused. He wanted to walk on his own training path.”

Linley couldn’t help but begin to admire this Olivier. A War God who had surpassed the Saint level long ago wanted to accept him as a disciple, but he actually refused. Indeed, only a man with supreme confidence could do such a thing.

“This is the first person to refuse the War God in all of history,” Luther said worshipfully. “Ley, at first, many people thought that Olivier was insane and insulted him. But... Lord Olivier wasn’t just bragging. Three years ago, when Olivier entered the Saint level, he immediately challenged the Stellar Sword Saint, Dillon.”

“Dillon?” Linley frowned.

Linley could still clearly remember that when those two Saint-level combatants did battle in the skies above the town of Wushan, one of them had been the Stellar Sword Saint, Dillon. The other was a Saint-level Grand Magus, Rudi. These two names had been forever engraved in Linley’s mind.

“Right. Lord Dillon, the Stellar Sword Saint, has been famous for a long time, and he has been a Saint-level combatant for nearly a century. Olivier had just entered the Saint level, and he immediately went to challenge Dillon. Many people thought that Olivier was too brash and arrogant. But the day of their duel...”

Luther’s eyes were filled with awe and worship. “Within three sword strokes, the Stellar Sword Saint, Dillon, had been defeated. To be able to defeat the Stellar Sword Saint, Dillon, as soon as he entered the Saint level was something which stunned everyone. Only now, due to his power, was he publically acknowledged as a genius.”

Linley, too, was filled with admiration.

In the past, he had often discussed powerful combatants with Grandpa Doehring. Linley knew very well... that there was a large difference between early-stage Saints, middle-stage Saints, late-stage Saints, and peak-stage Saints.

Dillon had reached the Saint level nearly a hundred years ago, but he was defeated in just three sword strokes by the Prodigy Sword Saint, Olivier. Linley had to admit that Olivier was incredibly powerful. What's more, he had only been forty-seven years old.

For someone to reach the Saint level at forty-seven years of age, and be so powerful.

Even the Supreme Warriors wouldn't be much better than this.



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Chatting with these hired soldiers who travelled everywhere, Linley learned a great deal regarding the O'Brien Empire, giving him a good sense of the area.

By nightfall, the caravan once more came to a halt.

Campfires were lit everywhere, and all sorts of wild roasted dishes were brought out. Linley followed Luther and Lowndes to a campfire, where they began to roast chunks of leg meat.

Linley suddenly turned to look in the direction of Haeru. Right at that moment, a young nobleman dressed in a suit was standing next to the Blackcloud Panther, looking excitedly at it.

"What a beautiful panther." The young nobleman's eyes were shining like gems as he stared at the Blackcloud Panther. He even stretched his hand out, intending to touch him.

The Blackcloud Panther was a peak-stage magical beast of the ninth rank. He was extremely arrogant. How could he allow an ordinary person to touch it?

The Blackcloud Panther suddenly swung its head , fixing its cold eyes upon that young nobleman. Unhappily, he began to let out a menacing growl.

“Groooooowl.”

“Ah!!!” Terrified, the young nobleman quickly retreated, falling on his back as he did. His face was white with fear.

“Haha.” Luther, Lowndes, and Linley all began to laugh.

At this time, the brocade door to a nearby carriage was pushed open, and a young woman dressed in a light violet dress immediately jumped out of the carriage, frightened. “Keane, Keane, what happened?”

Seeing this woman, Linley’s eyes suddenly lit up.

Her full-body dress was rather tight, revealing her lithe, slim little waist, as well as making her chest swell all the more. As she ran, her long hair fluttered about.

That slender figure was one of the top three female figures Linley had ever seen. Judging by her appearance, she should be seventeen or eighteen years old.

“Big sis, big sis!” That young noble clutched this lady in terror.

Haeru, the Blackcloud Panther, let out another dissatisfied growl in the direction of the young nobleman. This terrified the young noblewoman so much that her face instantly turned white as well.

“Don’t be afraid. Haeru won’t hurt you,” Linley called out, laughing.

“Haha, Miss Jenne, you need to take good care of your little brother. This powerful magical beast isn’t one of your household pets. If he pisses it off, it might eat him. Hahaha!” Lowndes laughed loudly.

These words made the faces of both Jenne and the young nobleman turn white.

Jenne pulled the young nobleman to his feet, and then quickly curtsied in apology. “Sorry, sorry.”

“No need to apologize to us. This black panther is Ley’s. You can apologize to him.” Luther joined the fun as well.

Jenne glanced at Linley. Clearly, she wasn’t good at interacting with people.

Her face immediately turned red upon looking at him. “Lord Ley, so sorry.”

“It’s fine. In the future, just make sure your little brother doesn’t irritate Haeru anymore.” Linley laughed. It had been a long time since he had met a girl who was so easily embarrassed.

Jenne immediately pulled the young nobleman by the hand in the direction of that nearby carriage.

“Amusing, amusing.” Linley laughed, raising the wineskin to his lips for another swig.

## A Single Sword

“Ley, what do you think of that Miss Jenne? She’s quite something, isn’t she?” Lowndes said with a quiet chortle.

“She is quite something.” Linley nodded in praise.

Next to them, Luther walked over. “She isn’t just ‘something’. In all these years I’ve been roaming about, I’ve seen countless beautiful women. But Miss Jenne... heh heh... she’s absolutely tops. Ley, are you interested in Miss Jenne?”

Linley blinked in shock.

Lowndes also glanced at Linley with a wink that all men understood. “Ley, it’s quite normal for powerful people to have beauties with them. If you don’t seize the opportunity, after you leave the caravan, you won’t have another chance.”

“You two...” Linley didn’t know whether to laugh or cry.

Alice had long ago caused Linley to seal off his heart with respect to romantic love. And right now, Linley wasn’t yet at the stage where he was ravenous and would just go chasing after every beautiful girl he saw.

“Miss Jenne and her little brother just came out,” Luther suddenly said in a soft voice.

Linley turned to look. Indeed, Miss Jenne and her younger brother Keane were headed towards a campfire, which was currently manned by her elderly servant.

That young noble, Keane, couldn’t help but turn to look at the Blackcloud Panther again.

The Blackcloud Panther immediately revealed its gleaming, cold fangs. Keane was so terrified that he tightly clutched his sister’s hands. Miss Jenne, as though sensing something, turned to look in Linley’s direction as well.

Nodding somewhat apologetically at Linley, Miss Jenne led her little brother to sit next to the campfire.



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“Big sis, that magical beast is so handsome!” Keane’s eyes were as bright as gems and filled with longing. “It’ll be great if one day, I too have a powerful magical beast.”

The old servant chuckled. “Young master Keane, taming a magical beast is no easy feat. To tame a powerful magical beast, you must totally subdue it, and to subdue it, you must defeat it head on. From what I know, the weakest of the panther-type magical beasts are all of the seventh rank. That Lord Ley is a truly powerful combatant.”

“The weakest is a magical beast of the seventh rank?” Keane sucked in a cold breath. “Grandpa Lambert, is it as powerful as you, Grandpa Lambert?”

In Keane’s mind, the person he worshipped the most in the world was his Grandpa Lambert.

When he and his sister were in the Holy Union, they had no one to rely on at all. The entire time, it was Grandpa Lambert who had protected them. If it wasn’t for Grandpa Lambert, those nobles in the town they lived in would’ve sent people long ago to seize his sister. He had personally seen Grandpa Lambert shatter a noble’s guard’s shield with one punch, then easily defeat ten guards.

“Me? I just have a bit of ability. He could kill me in one blow with ease,” Lambert chuckled, rubbing Keane’s head. “Young master Keane, when we arrive in the O’Brien Empire, you must be careful. There are many experts in this world. I’m only able to protect you in places like those small towns. But when we reach the big cities...”

“It’s fine! This time, we’re going to assume the position of city governor, right?” Keane arrogantly raised his little head up high. “When I’m the city governor, who will I fear?”

Looking at Keane, Jenne couldn't help but also affectionately pat Keane on his little head. "Keane, in the future, you will be a majestic city governor."

"Of course." Keane was very confident.



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Slowly, most of the people in the caravan began to drift off to sleep. Only a few mercenaries remained awake in a defensive perimeter around the caravan. Linley was seated cross-legged on the ground, the adamantine heavy sword placed on his lap as always.

Linley didn't know how the ancestors of his clan had trained in the third level of using the heavy sword, the 'impose' level. But Linley's training method was to allow his soul to become one with the great earth and one with the boundless wind.

The earth possessed a wondrous throbbing pulse of its own. That unique pulse had its own unique rhythm, which Linley submerged himself into.

As for the boundless wind which filled all the skies, it had a deep, intimate connection with space, which was also an important part of being able to understand the essence of the 'impose' level.

Submerged within nature... understanding nature...

In this state, Linley didn't notice the passage of time at all. By the second half of the night, when the vast majority of the caravan was asleep, only a few hired mercenaries maintained their watchful vigilance.

"Rasp, rasp."

Deep night. The cold wind was blowing, and it rustled against the tips of Linley's hair. Linley's closed eyes suddenly opened, and then he sheathed the adamantine heavy sword onto his back.

"Get up." Linley patted Lowndes and Luther twice each.

Lowndes and Luther were both mercenaries who lived by the edges of their weapons. They slept very lightly. Immediately, they woke up. Lowndes and

Luther quickly saw that it was still midnight.

“Ley, it’s late at night. Why aren’t you sleeping?” Lowndes was a bit unhappy, but he didn’t dare to complain.

“Bandits are coming,” Linley said casually.

“Oh.”

Luther’s eyes were drifting closed again, but then suddenly they snapped open. Staring at Linley in shock, he said, “Ley, what’d you say? Bandits are coming?”

“A group of roughly a hundred or so bandits are approaching us from approximately three hundred meters in front. They’re slowly making their way here,” Linley continued.

Just then, Linley had been communing with the throbbing pulse of the earth and the flows of the wind.

Linley could clearly feel those hundred or so feet coming from hundreds of meters away. Naturally, under normal conditions, Linley wouldn’t have been able to detect them so early. But after having become one with nature, he naturally was far more sensitive.

Luther was frightened.

“Don’t stand there like an idiot. Wake up all of our brothers.” Lowndes was far calmer.

“Oh. Got it.” Luther immediately left to wake up one mercenary after another, while Lowndes went to warn all of the mercenaries who were on guard.

Being woken up from their sweet dreams in the middle of the night, the mercenaries were naturally all unhappy.

“Bandits coming.” But that phrase was enough to shock them into scrambling up.

“Where are they?” Staring in all directions into the pitch-black night, the awakened mercenaries couldn’t even see the shadow of a bandit. All of them began to grow unhappy.



The leader of the mercenaries, a heavily bearded man, grabbed Lowndes by his shirt. "You said there are bandits. Where?"

"Not me. It was Ley who said there are bandits," Lowndes hurriedly explained.

"Oh?" The heavily bearded man was shocked. With regards to this expert whom they picked up mid-way through their journey, just by looking at that black panther, the heavily bearded man knew that this was no one he could afford to offend. For an expert to make this claim, he clearly wouldn't just be playing a prank.

And just at this moment, the heavily bearded man could also begin to hear the extremely soft sounds of stealthy footsteps coming from afar.

Given the heavily bearded man's power, he could make out the sounds quite clearly now.

"Bandits. Prepare, prepare!" The heavily bearded man's terrifying roar immediately woke everyone up. Even many slumbering merchants as well as their carriage drivers were woken up.

These hundred or so mercenaries lined up in an orderly fashion.

"Haha, Big Beard Malone. I didn't expect you to be so alert. You've made some progress over these years. Looks like our ambush failed. We'll have to make a frontal attack then." A loud laugh could be heard, and then a figure dressed in black appeared in front of the caravan.

"It's you?" The heavily bearded man's face changed as he stared at that one-eyed, golden-haired man.

McKinley, the One-Eyed Viper. In this long road which nobody controlled, this name was a very famous one. This person was famed for both his viciousness as well as his power.

"Waaaaa!" An infant in the caravan behind began to cry.

"Bandits!" Many people began to panic.

"QUIET!" the heavily bearded man roared angrily. Many people in the caravan immediately began to arrange themselves in groups, making sure that everyone

was together. A number of youngsters armed themselves with weapons, preparing to resist.

The heavily bearded man looked at the one-eyed golden-haired man. “One-Eyed Viper, don’t push things too far. How about this. I’ll offer you five thousand gold coins for you and yours to allow us past. Deal?”

“Five thousand gold coins?” The one-eyed man laughed coldly. “Malone, do you take me, McKinley, to be a beggar? Listen up. A hundred thousand gold coins, and I’ll let you go. Otherwise... hmph.”

The faces of all the mercenaries sank.

A hundred thousand gold coins? Their compensation for this escort mission was only sixty or seventy thousand gold coins. If they were to offer a hundred thousand gold coins, they would be paying out of pocket. After all, according to the mercenary escorting rules, once they accepted an escort mission, even if they had to pay off some bandits, the mercenary company would have to pay out of pocket.

“One-Eyed Viper, don’t go overboard. You should be satisfied to earn five thousand gold without a single man of yours dying.” The heavily bearded man hefted his battleaxe. “Otherwise. We’ll just have to see who is stronger.” Big Beard Malone was quite confident. In the past, he had battled against McKinley, and they were about equal in strength. He believed that with the ambush a failure, McKinley wouldn’t dare to risk everything in an all-out assault.

“That’s how it should be. Brothers, attack!” McKinley shouted in a high voice.

Instantly, all of the bandits drew their weapons and, howling angrily, began to charge. This really did completely shock Malone.

“Swish!” “Swish”! “Swish!”

The archers on both sides began to release their arrows without mercy, but in a small-scale skirmish like this with only a hundred people on each side, archers didn’t have too great an impact on the overall battle.

“Malone, die!” McKinley charged forward, a sharp polearm in his arms. Leaping into the air, with all his might, he delivered a tremendous blow against Malone.

Malone swung his battleaxe upwards, unwilling to show any weakness.

“Thruuum.” The dark aura covering the polearm suddenly dramatically intensified.

“BAM!”

Malone felt his hands grow numb, and he couldn’t help but take a few steps back.

“You...?” Malone stared at McKinley in astonishment. He knew exactly how powerful McKinley was. In terms of frontal assaults, his own weapon held an advantage over McKinley’s. But just then, the opponent had an advantage over him. This...

“Your guess is correct. I’ve already entered the eighth rank as a warrior.” McKinley’s face was filled with arrogance.

“No wonder you weren’t worried about making a frontal assault at all.” Malone now understood.

“Boss, there’s a pretty woman here,” a voice suddenly rang out.

McKinley immediately turned his head and saw Jenne, her face pale from terror and shock. Right now, Jenne was frantically protecting her little brother. The pitiable look on her face was quite stirring indeed.

“Haha, that woman is mine!” McKinley immediately grew excited.



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The mercenaries were battling against the bandits. A bandit decapitated a mercenary, and then was run through the chest by another mercenary’s sword.

“Retreat, retreat!” Malone bellowed as he quickly retreated. All of his mercenaries retreated with him as well.

“Lord Ley, I beg of you, please rescue our caravan,” Malone said respectfully towards Linley, begging him for aid. Right now, the mercenaries had formed into a circle, with all the merchants and the others inside the ring. Linley and Malone were both located at the outermost layer of the circle.

Faced with Malone's plea, Linley nodded once.

"I'll only help you deal with the leader," Linley said. Malone instantly was so excited that his eyes shone. If McKinley was killed, how could they be afraid of those remaining bandits?

Jenne was tightly holding her younger brother near the campfire.

"Sis, that mercenary captain seems to be begging Lord Ley." Keane's eyes were glowing as he watched all of this. Jenne turned to look at Linley as well.

Linley was standing in the middle of the road, calmly looking at the bandits.

"F\*ck off!" Wielding his polearm, McKinley charged forward at high speed. He was advancing at an extremely fast speed, and his body was also flickering from left to right, as though he had transformed into two separate figures, making it difficult for one to determine who the real McKinley was, and which was the illusion.

Illusionary Blade!

This was the trademark special skill of McKinley, the One-Eyed Viper!

"How laughable." Linley, having already reached the level of 'impose', held techniques of this level in absolutely no regard at all.

"Die!" A terrifying, ferocious gleam appeared in McKinley's eye.

Linley drew the adamantine heavy sword from its sheath on his back. This drawing motion carried with it an astonishing, imposing aura, as though all of the space around it had suddenly become frozen.

The adamantine heavy sword chopped towards McKinley in a very simple manner.

McKinley immediately wanted to dodge, but to his terror, he discovered that the space around him seemed to have become suddenly compressed and locked. In that moment, not even sound could escape from the area.

He had nowhere to dodge, and in fact, he couldn't even see anything else. His eye could only watch as the adamantine heavy sword drew closer and closer.

He wanted to raise his polearm to block, but he felt as though he had been

mired in an endless pit of quicksand. The polearm felt as though it weighed ten thousand pounds, and was extremely slow.

“Bam!”

The adamantine heavy sword landed against McKinley’s body. Suddenly, McKinley’s entire body, from head to toe, transformed into meat pulp. The bandits, the mercenaries, Jenne, Keane, and the others all stared in astonishment, their mouths hanging open.

“The rest of those little bandits are for you to handle.” Linley replaced his sword into its sheath as he spoke calmly to Big Beard Malone.

## Hands

Under the glow of the campfires, everyone's faces were half-lit, half-shadowed. The smell of blood still infested the area, but now, the men on both sides of the battle only stared in shock at that corpse that had been transformed into a pile of flesh and blood, then at Linley and the adamantine heavy sword he carried.

A combatant of the eighth rank had been killed in one sword stroke...

This...

Was hard to believe!

"My brothers, let's kill these bandits!" Big Beard Malone was the first to react, and he immediately shouted in excitement. "Kill these bastards and avenge our slain comrades!"

Hearing this roar by Big Beard Malone, all of the bandits woke up as well. Their leader, the One-Eyed Viper, McKinley, was killed in one stroke. Even if the mercenaries weren't there, Linley alone could lay waste to them all with that heavy sword.

"Vengeance! Vengeance! Kill!" The mercenaries' eyes were blazing as they were suddenly filled with confidence. One after another charged forward, weapons at the ready.

"Flee, quick!"

The bandits shouted loudly, as they all began to flee, forgetting everything else. The archers of the mercenary company immediately began to nock their bows. Staring coldly at the backs of the fleeing bandits, one sharp arrow was shot out after another. "Swish." "Swish." Six bandits were hit by arrows and fell to the ground.

In the blink of an eye, the seventy or so remaining bandits disappeared into

the darkness.

The mercenary company didn't engage in pursuit for too long, chasing after them for only a hundred or so meters before returning. After all, their prime responsibility was to protect the caravan.

"Whew."

The many merchants and travelers in the caravan all sighed in relief. But at this time, the faces of the mercenaries were quite ugly to behold, as they began to collect the corpses of the ten or so comrades who had died.

"Everyone, you can get back to your rest," Malone said loudly.

Quite a few mercenaries had been wounded as well, and had to rest and be treated. Those hundreds of people in the caravan began to calm down, each returning to their own places. As long-time travelers, they often experienced such events, and wouldn't be too shocked or concerned now.



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One campfire after another was lit, and the ten or so mercenary corpses were buried within the desolate earth at the sides of the road. Mercenaries who lived by the edges of their blades could die at any time. And once they died, their bodies would all be buried thusly, with the other mercenaries at most bringing some keepsakes of theirs back home for them.

Leaning against a large tree by the roadside with the adamantine heavy sword on his back, Linley quietly watched everyone else.

"Lord Ley." Many of the caravan merchants ran over, expressing their gratitude towards Linley. Many of them even wanted to give gold coins to Linley as a gift, but Linley respectfully declined them all.

"Brothers, a good journey to you!" Malone roared loudly.

All of the mercenaries present were standing in front of the graves. In unison, they bowed deeply towards the graves. In the lives of these mercenaries, death was a common occurrence. After paying their respects, all of them returned to

their normal positions.

The captain of this mercenary company, Big Beard Malone, headed towards Linley with Luther and Lowndes alongside him. Very gratefully, he said, "Lord Ley, thank you. If it wasn't for you, our mercenary company..." Malone fell silent, shaking his head.

"Ley, thank you so much for saving our mercenary company," The young Luther said gratefully.

Linley's initial warning to them as well as his assistance at the end had both been utterly invaluable in saving the mercenary company.

"No need," Linley said with a calm laugh.

"Lord Ley, here is ten thousand gold coins." Malone withdrew a magicrystal card from his pockets. "This magicrystal card is an un-bound one, and has ten thousand gold coins within it. Lord Ley, you must accept it. If it wasn't for you, not only would our mercenary company have failed our mission, we most likely would've all died as well."

Linley shook his head with a laugh.

"Ley, please accept it," Lowndes immediately urged. Mercenaries were usually quite magnanimous. These people who spent their lives living by the edges of their blades generally held in high regard the codes of valor, brotherhood, and friendship.

"Do I look like someone who needs money to you?" Linley looked at the three of them.

Within his interspatial ring, Linley had twenty-two magicrystal cards, each with one hundred million gold coins. 2.2 billion gold coins! Even the Dawson Conglomerate wouldn't be easily persuaded to bring out such a vast fortune at once.

Some of the clans in the Four Great Empires were very powerful and very wealthy, but no matter how powerful they were, they couldn't compare to the wealth of a royal clan.

After all, those extremely large and powerful clans in the Four Great Empires



still had to pay an enormous amount of taxes each year to the Emperor.

By comparison, the ruler of the Kingdom of Fenlai, compared to those major clans, had much more power in his own domain. The wealth that had been built up over thousands of years was a frightening sum indeed.

After hearing Linley's words, Malone was briefly startled, but then didn't press it. He didn't dare to keep squabbling with a powerful combatant such as Linley. And in addition, it truly wasn't easy for his mercenary company to make a living either.

"Captain Malone, go take care of your mercenaries. I see that quite a number of them suffered serious injuries," Linley said.

"Then Lord Ley, I leave you to your rest. I'll take my leave now," Malone said respectfully. Powerful combatants were treated with respect no matter where they were.

The campfires blazed. Many of the people in the caravan weren't able to fall asleep. Many of them hunched over campfires. Aside from a minority who had managed to fall asleep, most were talking about what had just happened. Every so often, glances would be sneaked towards Linley. Clearly, the topic of their conversation was Linley.

Right now, Linley was seated cross-legged, attuning himself to the vast, boundless earth, as well as the wind which spanned the skies.

After having spent three years training in the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, Linley had learned quite a bit about the proper way of training. Both warriors and magi, in the end, had to learn how to understand and become attuned to nature.

For example, just now, both Linley and McKinley were warriors of the eighth rank.

But in terms of true understanding, McKinley was still on the most basic level of attack, while Linley had already reached the third level, and was able to 'impose' in battle. This 'imposing power' was the power to impose upon the heavens and the earth to constrain his enemies. When he struck out with his sword, he had disrupted the entire surrounding space.

The difference between the two of them was too great. For him to be killed in a single stroke wasn't strange at all.

"If I had not trained within the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts and forgot about everything besides training for three years, no matter how long I stayed in Hess City, I probably wouldn't have been able to rise to another level of understanding," Linley mused to himself.

Many of the people in the caravan were discussing Linley, but Linley didn't pay any attention to them as he quietly meditated.

"Ley, Lord Ley?" a nervous voice rang out next to Linley.

Hearing this voice, Linley turned around. It was that young nobleman, who was standing up as straight as a ramrod. Keane. A hint of a smile appeared on Linley's face. "Keane. Right? What is it?"

Hearing Linley call him by his name, Keane felt very proud. He said quietly, "Lord Ley, I have a request."

"Sit first, then talk."

Linley's attitude made Keane relax just a little, and he sat down next to Linley. His eyes filled with worship, he said to Linley, "Lord Ley, just then, your sword blow was so powerful. I've been bullied ever since I was a kid. I want to be a powerful warrior as well. Can you teach me?"

Linley was startled.

Warrior training wasn't a matter of just a few days. It required many years of accumulated hard work, as well as good natural talent. It also required good instructors. Only when all three criteria were fulfilled could a powerful combatant be produced.

"That's a bit difficult, and I don't have enough time to train you." Linley laughed.

Keane hurriedly nodded, waving his hands frantically. "No, Lord Ley, I don't need to learn too much. I don't need to be too powerful. I just want to learn that sword stroke you used just now. Just that one sword stroke." As he spoke, Keane even pantomimed the actual sword blow.

“Just that one sword stroke?” Linley didn’t know whether to laugh or to cry.

Although that sword stroke of his had seemed easy, it had required over ten years of hard training as well as changes to both his mind and spirit. Only then was he able to understand this ‘impose’ level. Not even most warriors of the ninth rank were able to grasp any level of ‘impose’, much less those of the eighth rank.

According to the Baruch clan’s records, that ancestor who wielded the heavy warhammer, upon reaching the Saint level, was still only capable of reaching the level of ‘wielding something heavy as though it were light’. Only after being at the Saint level for more than ten years did the ancestor begin to understand how to ‘impose’.

Magi found it naturally easier than warriors to become one with nature.

For a pure warrior to truly understand and comprehend ‘impose’ was far more difficult than a dual-class combatant such as Linley, who was both magus and warrior.

“Is it very... very hard? I’m not afraid,” Keane said.

“Keane,” a gentle voice called out, and Jenne rushed over, dressed in light blue and holding some clothes in her hands. She said towards Keane with concern, “The night is growing cold. Bundle up.”

Keane pouted, shaking his head. “No.”

Jenne couldn’t help but frown, but there was nothing she could do.

Keane continued, “Big sis, look, Lord Ley is only wearing a thin shirt. I’m already wearing a lot, and you want me to wear even more?”

Linley couldn’t help but let out an unexpected laugh. This Keane was actually comparing himself to him? Even in the most freezing of winters, Linley wouldn’t feel cold, much less now.

“Keane, bundle up,” Linley said.

Linley’s words seemed to have more of an effect than Jenne’s. “Oh.” Keane accepted the clothes from Jenne, then put them on. Jenne gratefully looked at Linley. “Thank you, Lord Ley.”

Linley smiled and nodded.

As Jenne and Linley exchanged glances, Jenne immediately blushed red slightly.

But Linley, quite by accident, noticed Jenne's hands. When he saw them, he was quite surprised. From what Linley could tell, Jenne was without question a young noble lady, but Jenne's hands seemed rather coarse.

"Keane, don't disturb Lord Ley for too long. Lord Ley needs to rest as well." Jenne smiled apologetically towards Linley, and then she went back to her own carriage, face still slightly red.

Linley looked at Keane.

"Keane, does your sister often do chores at home?" Linley was very curious. Most noble ladies had hands that were extremely tender and soft. In terms of both bearing as well as clothing, Jenne was definitely a noble lady, but her hands...

Keane nodded. "Right. Lord Ley, you probably can't tell from the way I've dressed, but I feel really awkward in these clothes. It's been a long time since I've dressed this formally." Keane tugged at his collar. "Actually, my sister and I were living in an ordinary mountain village. Only Grandpa Lambert was there to take care of us. Big sis usually had to do most of our family chores."

"Oh?" Linley was beginning to grow curious. "But your sister's demeanor doesn't seem like that of an ordinary village girl."

Keane nodded. "Of course. Our father was the governor of a prefecture-level city and had an exceedingly high social status. When we were young, we stayed in the governor's mansion. But when I was six, my mother, my sister, and myself were forced out by our aunt. Thus, my mother took my sister and I back to her home. My big sis, when she was young, received all the education that a young noble lady should have, and when we left our father's home, she was already ten. So she naturally continued to maintain the noble customs which had already become ingrained within her. But I was young, and my mother was never in good health. Grandpa Lambert couldn't take care of both of us by himself, so big sis often had to do housework. Big sis can do anything!"

“I remember in the heart of winter, big sis’ hands had begun to split from the cold, but she’d still cook for me. I wanted to help, but she wouldn’t let me.” Keane bit his lips, eyes starting to turn red. “This time, when I take over the position of city governor, I definitely won’t let big sis do any more chores. I’m going to let a huge number of servants take care of sis.”

Hearing this story, Linley couldn’t help but admire this Jenne, who outwardly looked so fragile and so shy.

“You are going to take over the position of city governor? Didn’t your aunt expel you though?” Linley asked.

Keane didn’t hide anything. “At first, my aunt used every method available to her to make us leave, so as to guarantee that her son would be the next city governor. Unfortunately... that garbage son of hers did nothing but drink and fool around. Immediately after my father died, that piece of trash felt delighted as he had nothing to fear now, and became even more dissolute. From what I heard, not too long ago, he died in the arms of some woman. After he died, naturally the position of city governor falls to me.”

Keane looked at Linley with excitement. “Lord Ley, please teach me. Once I become city governor, I’ll definitely give you a really, really high position!”

## Blackrock City

Right. A kid who had lived in a small village after the age of six would naturally be very innocent. Linley felt that Jenne was quite innocent as well.

Through that short conversation, Linley had already learned a great deal about this little fellow, Keane.

At the same time, Linley more or less also understood what was going on with him and his sister.

“Assume the position of city governor? I’m afraid it won’t be that easy,” Linley thought to himself. Compared to these two innocent siblings, Linley could see much more deeply.

The highest level of city in the O’Brien Empire was the imperial capital, followed by the provincial capitals of the seven provinces. Beneath the level of the provincial capitals were the prefectural cities, then ordinary cities, and then countryside villages.

The status of a governor of a prefectural city was actually quite high.

How could the position of governor of a prefectural city be so easily acquired by an innocent countryside-raised child?



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After training the entire night, when Linley next opened his eyes, it was already dawn.

“Lord Ley, by nightfall tonight, we should be at the border cities of the empire.” Lowndes chortled. “Lord Ley, let’s eat breakfast together.”

“Alright.”

Linley and Bebe headed over to them. As for Haeru... the food there wasn't nearly enough for him. Late last night, Haeru had entered the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts and only returned after having eaten a good, full meal.

Within a carriage not too far away from Linley.

"Sis, I'll get off first." Keane happily hopped off the carriage.

Lambert looked at Keane, who had not a care in the world. He shook his head mentally, and then looked at Jenne. Lambert knew very well how innocent and how kind Jenne was.

"Miss, don't rush off just yet." Lambert squeezed out a smile.

"Grandpa Lambert, what is it?" Jenne looked questioningly at Lambert with her big eyes.

Lambert said, "Miss, you saw as well how we met with bandits on the way. When we reach the border cities, we'll have to separate from the caravan. By then, I, an old man, along with you and the young master will be all alone on the road. If we meet with any bandits on the way, I might not be able to overcome them."

Jenne couldn't help but to think back to that bloody scene of attacking bandits from the previous night.

"Right. Then what should we do?" Jenne was a bit nervous.

Lambert laughed. "Miss, didn't you notice that Lord Ley? Even the leader of those bandits was killed by Lord Ley with a single sword stroke. As long as Lord Ley is willing to protect you, you definitely won't be in any danger."

Jenne was eighteen years old, after all. She wasn't as irresponsible as Keane.

"Grandpa Lambert, if I try to invite a powerful combatant like that to assist us, do you think he will agree?" Jenne looked at Lambert.

Lambert laughed encouragingly. "Don't worry. Just tell him that you and Keane are the children of the governor of the prefectural City of Cerre, and that this time you are returning for the purpose of Keane assuming the governorship. If he can guard you on your way back, once you arrive at Cerre, you will definitely thank and reward him heavily. Remember... don't tell him too

much. Don't tell him that in the past, you were living in a small village. Just tell him what I told you now."

Lambert knew very well that if Linley became aware of the details of their situation, he probably wouldn't agree.

"Oh."

Jenne didn't even notice that there were some slight differences between the truth and what Lambert had just instructed her to say.

"Go, and remember what I told you. Act sincerely," Lambert encouraged.

"Okay." Jenne nodded. Taking a deep breath, she summoned her courage and descended from the carriage.

Watching Jenne leave the carriage, Lambert secretly sighed. "Alas. Madame, even on your death bed, you weren't willing to swallow your anger. You insisted on having Jenne and Keane go assume the position of city governor. Lord Count Wade is already dead, but the senior madame probably won't so easily allow Keane to assume the position of governor."

"If we had a combatant of the ninth rank protecting us though, then we will have a good chance." Late at night, Lambert had heard others whisper that McKinley had already reached the eighth rank as a warrior. But Linley had been able to easily kill him in one blow. As Lambert saw it, Linley should therefore be a warrior of the ninth rank.



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The wind was blowing. After eating to his content, Linley was relaxing comfortably for now, as they would depart again soon.

"The O'Brien Empire. Mm. We should be there tomorrow." Linley was reclining on his cart, lazily awaiting their departure. But right at this moment, from the corner of his eyes, Linley suddenly saw someone approaching.

"Jenne?" Linley sat up curiously.

Somewhat cautiously, Jenne was walking over to him. Seeing Linley sit up and



look at her, Jenne forced out a small smile. “Lord Ley, hello.”

“Miss Jenne, hello.” Linley was a bit confused. Why had this Miss Jenne come?

Jenne just stood there hesitantly for a moment, not knowing how to start.

“Miss Jenne, is there something I can help you with?” Linley asked preemptively.

Jenne’s face turned slightly red. Clearly, she was very nervous. “Lord Ley, it’s like this. My younger brother and I are journeying to my father’s prefectural city. My younger brother is going to assume the position of city governor. But we’re afraid that the journey to the city will be dangerous. Therefore, we were hoping... hoping to ask you, Lord Ley, to protect us.”

Getting this all out in one breath, Jenne began to stammer a bit.

Linley had a basic understanding of the general geography of the O’Brien Empire. His younger brother, Wharton, was in the southernmost administrative province of the O’Brien Empire, known as the O’Brien Administrative Province.

Linley himself currently was in the Northwest Administrative Province of the O’Brien Empire.

From the northwest province to the southernmost province was a journey that would most likely take a year and a half or so. But of course, if Linley hurried along the way by riding on the Blackcloud Panther, he could cross a thousand kilometers per day and arrive within ten days.

But Linley was in no rush.

His younger brother was in school at the O’Brien Academy. Why the need to rush over there? Right now, the most important thing for him was training and raising his own strength as much as possible.

“Protect you? For how long?” Linley asked with a laugh.

“Not too long,” Jenne hurriedly said. “The City of Cerre is in the Northwest Administrative Province. From here to there, it should only take us around ten days or half a month or so. When we get there, I will definitely thank you and reward you heavily.”

“Thank and reward me?”

Linley was sighing to himself. Based on Linley’s experience, he knew very well, how could the position of city governor of a prefectural city be so easily taken by a pair of innocent siblings who had no powerful backers at all?

“We’ll give you lots of gold coins.” Jenne looked hopefully at Linley.

Jokingly, Linley said, “Oh? How many gold coins?”

Jenne gritted her teeth. “Ten thousand gold coins? What do you think?” Jenne had been living in the village since she was ten. Normally speaking, one or two gold coins could last for quite a while in a place like that. She knew that the prefectural city was a wealthy place, and she believed that although ten thousand gold coins was an astronomical figure, the prefectural city should be able to support it.

“Ten thousand gold coins?”

That previous night, the mercenary captain had wanted to offer Linley ten thousand gold coins as a token of his thanks as well. But frankly, even aside from the wealth in Linley’s interspatial ring, each of Linley’s sculptures, given his status as a master sculptor, would be worth over a hundred thousand gold coins.

“Is that not enough?” Jenne stuttered.

Linley looked at Jenne. “Miss Jenne, generally speaking, how much did you and Keane spend each year in the village?”

“In the village?” Jenne was startled. Lambert had just instructed her repeatedly not to say that in the past she had lived in a village, but Linley had already known about it.

Jenne said honestly, “A few dozen gold coins each year. After all, we had to pay for my mother’s medical treatment. Right. Lord Ley, I don’t have that much money on me right now, but in the future, I will.”

Linley had to admit that she really was an innocent girl.

“So, um, actually, you know, it should be fairly safe inside the empire’s borders. Grandpa Lambert probably was just over-thinking things. Um. I should

leave.” Jenne felt rather awkward, and began to just blurt out random things.

“No. I just wanted to ask, right now, how many gold coins can you pay up front?” Linley asked.

After hearing that her prefectural city was in the Northwest Administrative Province, Linley had already made up his mind to help them, as it was on the way for him. After all, he was going to pass through the Northwest Administrative Province en route to the O’Brien Administrative Province.

“Right now? I have around ten gold coins on me.” Jenne withdrew a small pouch in her purse. “Uncle Lambert has a few more coins on him also.”

Linley accepted the pouch, retrieving a single gold coin from it.

“Done.” Linley placed this gold coin into his own pouch. “From this moment forward, I’ve accepted this escort mission. But of course, this gold coin is just your down payment. When your younger brother becomes the city governor, I’ll collect the remaining 9999 gold coins.”

Jenne was wildly overjoyed at her success.

“Thank you, thank you.” Jenne was so excited that her little face turned pure scarlet.



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The caravan began to move forward once more, and the Blackcloud Panther once more began to lope alongside Linley’s cart. At the same time, Haeru looked suspiciously at Bebe and growled, “Bebe. Master accepted an escort mission for just ten thousand gold coins?”

Even a hundred thousand gold coins wouldn’t be enough to invite an expert like Linley to help out.

Just by killing a magical beast of the eighth rank, Linley would be able to procure a magicite core of the eighth rank that was worth five hundred thousand gold coins. Generally speaking, it was difficult for combatants of the eighth rank to kill magical beasts of the eighth rank. Only combatants of the

ninth rank were able to kill magical beasts with confidence.

“Haeru, what do you know? The Boss is being benevolent, get it?” Bebe growled back to the Blackcloud Panther.

Growling to each other, the two magical beasts conversed in the language of magical beasts. Seeing them chatting to each other, Linley chuckled, continuing to sit quietly in the cart.

“Squeak, squeak.”

The cart’s wheels rhythmically squeaked, constantly moving forward. By the time the sun went down past the mountains, this caravan finally arrived at a border city of the O’Brien Empire.

Riding on the cart, Linley’s body swayed back and forth as he watched the distant city grow closer.

This was a pitch-black city that looked as if it were an enormous magical beast that had taken the land for itself. The walls of the cities were over thirty meters tall. Only powerful combatants would be able to scale such heights.

“Blackrock City. The ‘wall’ of the O’Brien Empire in the Northwest Administrative Province.” Linley had long since heard of this famous city.

Historically, there were quite a few major battles that had been fought at Blackrock City. Although many years had passed by, when they drew near Blackrock City, they could still see the dark red color staining many of the enormous black stones making up the walls of the city. These were dried bloodstains that had accumulated over countless years and battles.

“Everyone, we’ll part ways here,” Malone shouted loudly from outside the city walls.

Based on their mission requirements, their mercenary company was only responsible for delivering the caravan to this location. Immediately, the various merchants and travelers began to drive their carriages or carry their bags towards the city gates.

“Big brother Ley!” Keane called out from his carriage.

On the journey over, Keane had learned that Linley was going to escort them.

Immediately, he grew even closer to Linley, and Linley, in turn, told Keane to just address him as ‘big brother’. After all, Linley was only 21 years old.

“Let’s go together.”

Linley led his two-meter-tall, four-meter-long black panther directly towards the city gates. The previously lazy-looking guard, seeing Linley’s black panther, was so scared that he immediately took a few steps back.

Panther-type, tiger-type, and lion-type magical beasts were all high-class magical beasts. Even the weakest panther-type magical beasts and lion-type magical beasts were generally of the seventh rank.

Right now, in a time of peace, the security at the gates wasn’t too strict.

The gate guards didn’t even inspect Linley, directly allowing him entrance.

“My heavens, what rank of magical beast is that black panther? When it looked at me, my heart almost stopped from fear,” a gate guard cried out loudly in fear.

An older gate guard next to him lowered his voice and said, “Lower your voice. From what I know, the weakest type of panther, the Golden Tattooed Panther, is a magical beast of the seventh rank. This black panther is at least a magical beast of the eighth rank.”



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“Wow! Blackrock City is so developed!” Keane’s eyes were shining.

On the main streets of Blackrock City, Linley, Keane, and Jenne were walking side by side. Jenne was wearing a peaked cap on her head, pressed down firmly and with a veil in front of her face. After all, Jenne’s beauty could cause a great deal of trouble.

“He thinks THIS is developed?” Bebe squeaked on Linley’s shoulders.

Blackrock City was a city meant for war. Although it was fairly developed due to traders, there was no way it could compare to the now-lost Holy Capital, Fenlai City. Even when compared to Hess City, the capital of a kingdom, there

was quite a big difference.

“Careful.” Linley’s body suddenly turned into a blur as he flashed in front of Jenne and Keane.

“Swish.” “Swish.”

With a wave of his right hand, Linley snatched two arrows out of the air.

“You think you can run?” With a wave of his hands, Linley sent the two arrows going back the way they came, piercing through the throats of the two distant men who were preparing to flee.

“Urk...”

Those two men clutched their throats in shock, and then collapsed, dead.

“Ah!” The previously calm street became filled with screams, and many people began to run about in a panic.

“Let’s go,” Linley said to the stunned Jenne and Keane.

## Persuasion

“Move, now!” That old servant, Lambert, reacted quickly as well, immediately urging them to leave.

Totally baffled and confused, Jenne and Keane were tugged by Lambert and Linley away from this area. After all, given that people had just been killed on the streets, the city guard would soon arrive.

Linley wasn't afraid of the guards, but dealing with guards while also escorting Jenne was an extremely annoying task.

Aside from Linley and his group, many others around them were running away and fleeing wildly as well.

It was nightfall, and it should have been the most bustling time for this major road in Blackrock City, but in the blink of an eye, this part of the road became totally deserted. Nobody was within a hundred meters of those two corpses.

“Captain, what should we do?”

Seated next to a window within a private room in a hotel, two men were staring down at the scene below. One of them had long red hair, with a face that looked as though it had been carved with a knife. But right now, he had a sinister look on his face as he listened to the nearby subordinate query him.

“I didn't expect these two country bumpkin siblings to have such a powerful helper,” the red-haired man said coldly.

“Captain, that man even has a black panther. Panthers are all high-class magical beasts. For the likes of us to deal with such a powerful combatant... will be difficult,” a burly, broad-chested man beside the captain said in a quiet voice.

The red-haired man was frustrated as well.

Per the orders of the senior madame, they came to kill these two bumpkin

siblings. Per their intelligence, only the old servant with these two bumpkins posed any threat. But he was only a warrior of the sixth rank. In the O'Brien Empire, which was filled with experts, a combatant of the sixth rank was nothing.

Perhaps in some villages, a warrior of the sixth rank was powerful. But the leader of this squad, which had been sent out per the senior madame's orders, was himself a warrior of the seventh rank.

"A black panther... why haven't I ever seen this type of panther before?" The red-haired man was frowning. As an expert of the seventh level, he knew quite a bit about magical beasts.

Panther-type magical beasts included the Golden Tattooed Panther, the Blackstripe Panther, and others.

But this black panther with wavy black stripes was something he had never seen.

"That brown-haired man is clearly the master of this black panther. He is, at the very least, a combatant of the eighth rank." The red-haired man thought back to the scene of Linley suddenly snatching the arrows out of the air, and as he did, he shivered.

Arrows moved at an extremely high speed.

To be able to react and immediately move in front of Jenne and Keane, and then snatch the two arrows out of the air was something even most warriors of the eighth rank couldn't do.

"Captain?" the burly man next to him asked quietly.

The red-haired man turned to look at him. In a cold voice, he said, "Hmph. That brown-haired man is extremely powerful. For this mission, we can't fight them head on. Arrange for some people to keep watch on them secretly. I refuse to believe that expert will neither eat nor sleep. He can't always be together with those two siblings."

"As soon as that brown-haired man and those two are separated, immediately have our men kill the two," the red-haired man issued his order.



“Yes, Captain!” The burly man nodded and immediately left the room.

The red-haired man turned his head back, once more staring below through the window. Those two corpses still lay on the street with the arrows through their throats. The mounted city guards were just now rushing over.



\*

On the second floor of an ordinary hotel in Blackstone City, Linley, Jenne, Keane, and Lambert were seated in a private room. Even Bebe had a seat of his own. As for Haeru, he was lying down on the ground, his eyes contentedly half-shut.

Right now, Jenne and Keane’s faces were both still rather pale.

“Just... just now, I was so scared.” Keane’s eyes were still filled with terror.

Ever since he was young, Keane had lived in a countryside village. The most violent struggles he had ever seen were just some of the young men getting into serious fights with each other. How could he ever have experienced something like what he just saw?

Although on the road here, they had suffered a bandit attack, the bandits were fighting against the mercenaries, and hadn’t harmed them yet. But this time, the opponents had come for his life and his sister’s life.

Jenne’s eyes were filled with a hint of terror as well.

“Jenne, Keane, don’t be afraid.” Linley laughed as he consoled them.

To Linley, a small event like this couldn’t even impact his mood at all. In the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, he was constantly on guard for magical beasts laying in ambush for him.

And thus, within the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, Linley learned how to keep his heart as tranquil as water, come what may. How could a small event like this disturb him?

“Young master, young miss,” Lambert consoled as well. “We’re fine now. Don’t worry. Fortunately, we had Lord Ley with us today. Otherwise, things

would have been terrible. Young master, young miss, you absolutely must offer your thanks to Lord Ley.”

Only now did Jenne and Keane recover from their panic.

“Big brother Ley, we really owe you our thanks this time,” Keane said gratefully, and his eyes were glowing. “Big brother Ley, just now, you waved your hand and snatched the two arrows out of the air, and then with another wave... those two guys were dead.” Keane was indeed a child. In his excitement, he had totally forgotten his fear.

Jenne looked gratefully at Linley as well. “Thank you, big brother Ley.”

Towards Linley, Jenne felt gratitude from the bottom of her heart.

That first time she had seen Linley, Jenne had felt that he was a mysterious, powerful expert, an amazing person who commanded a mighty magical beast as well.

In particular, when Linley had agreed to escort and protect them, he had only taken a single gold coin. Although Linley said that he would collect the other 9999 when Keane became the city governor, Jenne, being an eighteen-year-old adult, knew when someone was acting out of kindness.

“No need for thanks. I agreed to protect you. This is nothing more than what I’m supposed to do.” Linley frowned. “What’s going on though? As soon as you entered Blackrock City, people tried to assassinate you? Who exactly have you offended?”

Keane was instantly baffled.

Jenne was confused as well. “I... I haven’t offended anyone.”

“Then who has enmity with you two?” Linley continued to ask.

Jenne was quiet for a moment, then said, “Right, if we talk about enmity, perhaps the only one with enmity towards us is my aunt.” Right at this moment, the old servant, Lambert, immediately interrupted their conversation. Laughing towards Linley, he said, “We don’t have any enemies. Their aunt just has some disagreements with them, that’s all. Lord Ley, no need to worry about these annoying things. Let’s all eat.”

Linley glanced at Lambert, then laughed and nodded. “Fine, let’s all eat.”

In truth, ever since Keane had told Linley about himself and his sister, Linley had a rough idea as to what was going on. This assassination attempt showed that clearly, it was because the main wife of the departed city governor didn’t wish for Jenne and Keane to assume the position of city governor.

But Linley didn’t say these things openly.



\*

That very night, the two siblings, Lambert, and Linley each retired to their own rooms. They had reserved a private, stand-alone villa.

Darkness descended.

Linley’s room was totally dark. Linley sat cross-legged on his bed, his heart totally calm as he quietly attuned with the throbbing pulse of the world and the flows of the wind.

Occasionally, when Linley had some insights, he would rise to his feet and casually swing his heavy sword.



\*

“Squeak.” Dressed in her sleeping clothes and her long hair unbound, Jenne walked towards the room of her old servant, Lambert. “Grandpa Lambert, are you sleeping yet?”

The door opened very quickly.

“Miss, quick, come in.” Lambert immediately opened the door for Jenne, then closed it after Jenne entered his room.

“Miss, what is it?” Lambert asked.

Jenne stared at Lambert. “Grandpa Lambert, tell me. Why does someone want to kill me and my younger brother? Is it my aunt?”

“Why would you think such a thing?” Lambert’s heart trembled.

Jenne said stubbornly, “Grandpa Lambert, don’t treat me like a little kid. The day my younger brother and I left the village, I thought we would be making a joyful return as we went to assume the position of city governor. But now, I understand. Aunt and her people won’t allow us to take the position over. The people who tried to kill us just now definitely were acting on her behalf. I can’t think of anyone else.”

Lambert looked at Jenne and let out a long sigh.

“Fine, miss. I admit, your suspicions are correct,” Lambert said resignedly.

Jenne started.

“So it really is...” Jenne murmured.

Jenne look at Lambert. “Grandpa Lambert, why didn’t you tell me and my younger brother from the start?”

“Sigh.” Lambert shook his head. “What would be the point? Even on her death’s bed, your mother couldn’t let go of this grievance. She insisted on having you and your little brother go take over the governor’s position. I know that given your temperament, you wouldn’t go against your mother’s dying wish.”

“Right. I’ll carry it out, even if it costs me my life.” Jenne nodded stubbornly.

“Since this is the case, it was better to let the two of you travel happily. In addition, I was trying to come up with ways to protect you two as well. If we hadn’t encountered Lord Ley, I would’ve come up with other ideas here in Blackrock City, so as to allow you two to safely reach Cerre City,” Lambert said honestly.

Living in the village, Jenne and Keane’s lives weren’t happy at all.

The nobles of the village all lusted after Jenne’s beauty, while Keane was often bullied as well. Even if Jenne and Keane had known how dangerous this journey would be, they still would’ve made this trip.

After all, once Keane assumed the governorship, his destiny would be totally transformed.

“Grandpa Lambert, will this trip be very dangerous?” Jenne had a very complex look on her face.

Lambert let out a deep sigh. “Originally, I didn’t think it would be too dangerous, but now, it seems as though that aunt of yours has really made up her mind to be vicious. She’s arranged for assassins as far away as Blackrock City. Most likely, the road to Cerre City will be very dangerous after all.”

“Then, Grandpa Lambert, why didn’t you explain clearly to big brother Ley?” Jenne stared at Lambert.

“We can’t.” Lambert shook his head. “After your father died, your aunt virtually took total control over Cerre City. She has quite a few experts under her control. If you openly ask your big brother Ley to fight against the power controlling a prefectural city, I’m afraid that he won’t do so for the sake of you and your brother. After all, it is extremely dangerous.”

The real power controlling a prefectural city possessed an astonishing amount of power.

Such a power should have several combatants of the eighth rank. Of course, combatants of the ninth rank weren’t very likely. Even one would be astonishing. After all, combatants of the ninth rank usually served the managing clan of an entire Administrative Province, or the Emperor himself. To serve a governor of a prefectural city... unlikely.

However, assassins didn’t have to rely solely on brute force. Poison, traps... all of these were possible.

“Very dangerous?” Jenne paused for a moment. “Grandpa Lambert, get some rest.” As she spoke, Jenne left Lambert’s room.

But after leaving Lambert’s room, Jenne didn’t immediately go back to her own. Rather... she headed for Linley’s.

“Knock, knock, knock.” Three raps on the door.

“Come in,” Linley’s voice rang out, while a lantern was lit inside the room.

Jenne pushed the door open and entered.

Linley left his bed and took a seat on his chair. Smiling, he said, “Miss Jenne,

it's very late. Is there something you need?"

"Big brother Ley." Jenne sat down. Taking a deep breath, she mustered up all her courage and said to Linley, "Big brother Ley, I have to tell you something."

"What is that?" Linley looked at Jenne.

Jenne said apologetically, "Actually, Keane and I have been living in a countryside village this entire time, and it has been a long time since we had seen our father. We aren't familiar at all with Cerre City, and we might not be successful in our attempt to take over the governorship of the city."

Jenne really was an extremely compassionate girl. Knowing how dangerous it was, she decided that she didn't want Linley to suffer these risks alongside them.

"Oh," Linley only said this in response.

But in his heart, Linley sighed to himself. This Jenne really was a pure, innocent girl.

Seeing Linley's reaction, Jenne thought that Linley didn't understand. She hurriedly explained, "Big brother Ley, originally, with regards to assuming the governorship, my thought was that either we would succeed, or we would fail and go home. But it looks like it won't be that simple. There are people out to kill us, and most likely, they were sent by our aunt. In the future, she'll probably use even more vicious means against us. If you stay by our side, it will be dangerous for you too."

## Repeated Assassination Attempts

“Very dangerous?” Linley began to laugh. “How dangerous, exactly?”

Seeing Linley’s reaction, Jenne couldn’t help but nod frantically. “Extremely dangerous. My aunt is currently in control of Cerre City, and her authority is on par with that of a city governor right now.”

Jenne said somewhat awkwardly, “Big brother Ley, I am so sorry. I didn’t tell you these things earlier. There’s no need for you to risk yourself for me. It isn’t worth it.”

“Haha...”

Linley laughed. “Not worth it? I don’t have anything else to do right now either. Escorting you along the way is just a matter of course. As far as the ‘danger’ is concerned? I have a much better understanding than you of whether or not it will be dangerous. Alright, Jenne, go back and get some rest.”

“Big brother Ley.” Jenne stared at Linley, somewhat stunned.

“Go back,” Linley said with a faint smile.

Jenne cast a grateful glance at Linley. “Thank you, big brother Ley.” But then, Jenne looked solemnly at him. “However, big brother Ley, I really don’t want you to risk yourself for my sake.”

“Go back to sleep.” Linley intentionally hardened his face, ‘barking’ at her.

“Oh.” Like a scolded child, Jenne nodded obediently, then turned and left via the door. Actually, in her heart, Jenne was feeling quite happy right now. She was, after all, an eighteen-year-old child. When such a girl saw such an outstanding young man treat her so well, of course the girl would feel happy. Jenne didn’t truly want to separate from Linley.

After walking outside the door, Jenne suddenly turned her head.

Jenne smiled beautifully. “Big brother Ley, when you harden your face like that, you look really grim and scary.” And then, like a playful child, Jenne fled down and away from Linley’s room.

Watching her flee, Linley didn’t know whether to laugh or to cry.

Taking a deep breath, Linley calmed himself down, then returned to his bed, quietly seating himself in the meditative position as he began to train his spirit. No matter when or where he was, Linley would always seize every possible moment for training.

Linley would never forget about seeking vengeance for his parents.

Could never forget about the death of Grandpa Doehring!

Could never forget that right now, he had a goal set for himself – Destroying the entire Radiant Church, root and stem!

“There will come a day...” Linley’s resolve was extremely firm. Right now, he desired neither authority nor status. All he wanted was to be able to train in peace.



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In another stand-alone residence facing this hotel complex, there was a room where a lamp had been lit the entire night. The grim red-haired man sat alone in that room, six others surrounding him.

“If we succeed with this initiative, everyone will benefit. But if we fail... you all know how cruel Madame Wade can be,” the red-haired man said calmly.

The six men’s hearts were all filled with fear.

Madame Wade was heartless and vicious. When Count Wade had been alive, virtually everyone in Cerre City knew that although Count Wade was the city governor in name, in reality, the true governor was Madame Wade.

Even Madame Wade’s son always felt frightened and cold when facing her.

Unfortunately, her son was dead now.



Per the rules, the successor to Count Wade as city governor should be his son. But how could Madame Wade so easily allow those two countryside-dwelling siblings to take the position?

“Captain, don’t worry. We definitely won’t fail this time. Although that expert is very powerful, he can’t always be protecting them,” one of the six men said with force and determination.

The others all nodded as well.

“Fine. I’ve already arranged for this hotel’s owner to be bribed. On the third floor of the hotel, there are two rooms which are facing the siblings’ residence. When the time comes, the four of you shall take up those two rooms. The other two will come with me. Remember, we will make our move as soon as we see the opportunity to, but our primary target is the boy,” the red-haired man reminded.

After all, right now, Keane was the first in line for succession.

Jenne was a girl. It would be much harder for her to become the city governor.

“When the boy comes out, we move. After killing him, if we have the chance, we can kill the girl as well,” the red-haired man said coldly. “Alright. Let’s go wait. Perhaps the boy will need to make a trip to the bathroom at night. That will allow us to complete our mission easily.”

“Yes, Captain!”

Per the red-haired man’s orders, four of the six men immediately left the residence, heading directly for the hotel and for the two rooms on the third floor that had been prepared.

A curved moon was hanging in the sky tonight, and moonlight cast a gentle glow upon the world.

The archers that the red-haired man had brought on this trip were the elite archers of Cerre City. They should have been able to easily shoot a weak, unprepared boy from the distance of fifty or sixty meters.

“Captain, what should we do?” the other two men asked, standing by the red-

haired man's side.

The red-haired man said calmly, "Your mission is... if those four do not have a chance to kill the boy, dress up as hotel attendants and deliver breakfast to them. When you near the boy, immediately kill him with one hit."

"Captain!" The two immediately became frantic.

Order them to dress as attendants to go assassinate the boy? But that powerful combatant with the black panther companion was right there. Even if they succeeded, would they be able to survive?

"Hmph."

The red-haired man looked coldly at them. "The two of you have no options. When the eight of you came with me, your families were all taken into custody by Madame Wade. Once your mission fails, not only will you be doomed, your families are finished as well. But if you succeed, even if you die, your families will be treated well."

Both men's faces turned white.

"The two of you should know what type of person Madame Wade is, and what type of person I am," the red-haired man said mercilessly.

Although this red-haired man was nominally their captain, in reality, he was nothing more than Madame Wade's loyal hound. He was merciless when killing people.

"But of course, if the other four succeed, then there'll be no need for the two of you to risk your lives," the red-haired man said calmly, "Right now, you two should pray. Pray that the War God blesses you."

Both of them were silent.

They were so-called 'elite' soldiers from the army. But how could small figures like them possibly struggle against Madame Wade? And what's more, the red-haired man was keeping his eyes on them.



Right now, there were four archers based in the third floor of the hotel. All of them were lying in ambush in their separate rooms. In each room, one was resting, while another was on watch. They had to stay in top condition, and once Keane stepped out, they would immediately awaken the other person.

The night slowly passed on.

This night, Keane didn't take a single step out of his room. The sky began to brighten, and the fresh morning air freshened the minds of the four archers considerably.

"Squeak."

The door opened.

"He's coming out," the archers on watch in each room reminded their partners.

The four archers in the two rooms all felt their heart rates speed up. All of them secretly looked out the window in the direction of Jenne and Keane's residence.

"It's the girl. Don't be impatient. Wait." The archers were waiting quietly.



\*

Pushing the door open, Jenne's face was wreathed in smiles. After knowing that Linley wouldn't leave and would continue to protect them, although she knew the path ahead was still perilous, Jenne still felt very happy.

"Ah. What nice, fresh air." Jenne closed her eyes, taking a deep breath of the fresh morning air.

And then, Jenne began to walk in the direction of her younger brother's room. In a clear voice, she called out, "Keane, time to get out of bed. Don't be 'lazy-a-bed'." As she spoke, Jenne knocked on the door.

Hearing Jenne's voice, Linley opened his eyes, ending his training. As for Haeru, Linley's Blackcloud Panther who was sleeping at the foot of Linley's bed, he didn't even bother to open his eyes.



\*

Still wearing his sleepwear, Keane opened his door. Rubbing his eyes sleepily, he muttered, “Sis, why are we getting up so early? I haven’t woken up yet. It’s been a long time since I’ve had a good sleep.”

Right at this moment, the eyes of the archers in the third floor of the hotel lit up.

“Target acquired.”

The four archers simultaneously nocked their bows, preparing to fire.



\*

“Young miss, young master. You two have gotten up quite early.” The old servant, Lambert, pushed his door open as well.

“Good morning, Grandpa Lambert,” Jenne said warmly.

Keane just pouted, still rubbing at his eyes. “Grandpa Lambert, it isn’t that I got up early, it’s that big sis woke me up.”

Right at this moment.

“Fire!”

From one of the rooms in the third floor, an archer let out the order in a quiet voice. Simultaneously, two of the archers rose to their feet, their bows appearing in view of the window.

“Swish!” “Swish!”

Two sharp arrows shot out simultaneously. At the same time, the two archers from the other room shot their arrows as well.

“Swish!” “Swish!”

Two arrows in front, two arrows behind. In the blink of an eye, they ripped through the air, arriving directly in front of Jenne. Two of these arrows were

aimed at her, while the other two were aimed at Keane.

At this moment... Linley was still in his room. The old servant, Lambert, was over ten meters away from the two siblings. Given his speed, there was no way he would be able to block in time.

“Young miss!” Lambert could only cry in alarm.

Jenne and Keane both felt the danger coming and turned their heads to look. But all the two siblings saw, as though in slow motion, were those arrows growing closer and closer to them.

The metal arrows sliced through the air with an ear-piercing hissing sound.

“Clang!” “Clang!” “Clang!” “Clang!”

Four sounds in a row.



\*

Jenne and Keane both stood there, frozen in shock. Next to them, Lambert was also frightened stiff. With a ‘squeak’ sound, the door to Linley’s room swung open.

Linley left his room.

“Bebe, all yours.”

Bebe was standing directly in front of Jenne and Keane. Just then, in the blink of an eye, Bebe had easily blocked four arrows in a row.

After the ambush attempt yesterday, Linley had expected this band of assassins to try again today. Thus, he had ordered Bebe to stand guard all night outside, just to be safe.

Given Bebe’s physically small size, when he hid amidst the grassy areas in the courtyard, not even Jenne and Keane would notice him, much less the archers.

“Boss, just watch.” Bebe excitedly licked his lips.

“Swoosh”

A cruel black shadow suddenly flashed through the air. A height of ten or so

meters was nothing to Bebe, who jumped directly through the open windows. When the archers who had just failed with their sneak attack saw the little black Shadowmouse, their hearts shook and they immediately attempted to flee.

But before they had a chance to leave their rooms, Bebe had entered.

His two claws flashed forward, and two archers immediately collapsed in pools of blood. Bebe then smashed hard against the wall, going straight through the hole he had created into the other room.

The two remaining archers were hurriedly fleeing as well.

Turning, they saw a black blur flying towards them. The two of them didn't even have the chance to call out. "Slash!" "Slash!" The sounds of two claws ripping through jugulars could be heard.

Bebe disdainfully looked at the two corpses on the ground, then immediately turned and left via the window, returning to the courtyard. From start to finish, only a few seconds had passed.

"Bebe, nicely done," Linley praised with a laugh.

Bebe delightedly raised his head up high. At this moment, the Blackcloud Panther, Haeru, growled unhappily towards Bebe. "Hmph, if I had gone, I would've been even faster."

Bebe immediately growled unhappily back at the Blackcloud Panther.

Linley couldn't be bothered trying to placate the two of them. Instead, he walked towards Jenne, Keane, and Lambert, who were still in states of shock. They had escaped from life-and-death encounters twice in two days. Although in the past, the two siblings had often been bullied, they had never been in such danger.

"Everything's fine now, everything's fine now."

Linley lightly patted Jenne on her shoulder. With a "Wah!" sound, Jenne suddenly burst into tears, hugging Linley. Next to her, Keane began to blubber as well, also charging forward to hug Linley.

Linley had no choice but to console these two siblings.

After the two of them had calmed down, Linley asked the nearby Lambert,

“Lambert, you made our breakfast arrangements already, right?”

“Yes. In a bit, the hotel will probably send people with our breakfast.”  
Lambert looked at Linley with the utmost gratitude in his eyes.

## The Apothecary

After experiencing yet another assassination attempt, Jenne and Keane both truly understood how dangerous this trip to Cerre City would be. They were at risk of dying at any moment. Unconsciously, both of them turned towards Linley.

“Big brother Ley, what should we do in the future?” Jenne looked at Linley as she asked this question, her heart filled with worry.

Right now, both Keane and Jenne felt as though they were lost within a boundless haze, unable to see the future. They didn’t know what would happen if they persevered.

Looking at this pair of innocent siblings, Linley consoled them, “Don’t worry. I’m confident in my ability to deal with an acting city governor of a prefectural city.”

Right now, Linley had reached the eighth rank, and was a peak-stage combatant of the ninth rank when Dragonformed. The Blackcloud Panther, Haeru, was also a peak-stage magical beast of the ninth rank, and Bebe’s power was no lower than that of Linley and Haeru’s either.

If this man and these two magical beasts attacked together, if no Saint-level combatants appeared, no matter how many people came, they would not be able to stop these three.

Hearing Linley’s words, Jenne and Keane couldn’t help but begin to worship Linley.

Although up till now, the two of them still had no idea as to how powerful Linley truly was, in their eyes, Linley was an amazing, mysterious individual. As for Lambert, upon seeing all this, he felt gratified as well. As long as Jenne and Keane could live a safe life, he would be happy even if he had to die. For such an expert to be willing to help these two countryside-raised siblings without



quibbling about anything else was more than enough for this old servant to be filled with gratitude.

“Knock!” “Knock!” “Knock!”

A knocking sound could be heard from outside.

“I’ll get it.” Lambert chortled. “It’s probably the attendants bringing breakfast.”

“Let’s get ready to eat.” Linley chuckled as he led Jenne and Keane to the living room. Lambert opened the gate to their residence, and two attendants pushing two food-laden trolleys entered.

“Deliver these to the living room,” Lambert chortled as he instructed them.

“Yes, sir.” The two attendants were extremely meek as they each pushed their trolleys inside. But as they moved in, they glanced at each other, a hint of determination in their eyes.

In this assassination attempt, regardless of whether or not they would succeed, they definitely would die.

They knew that Linley, that powerful expert, was still present. Either Linley or his black panther could easily kill them.



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Within the living room, Linley was seated at the head of the table. Jenne and Keane were seated at the sides. The two attendants smiled meekly as they pushed the carts into the room.

“Sir, miss, where should we place this whole roast sheep?” The attendant opened one of the lids.

“Place them over there.” Linley gestured at the stone floor nearby the table. The Blackcloud Panther, Haeru, was resting next to that table. Smelling the roasted meat, he raised his head.

For Haeru, an entire roast sheep was nothing more than a light breakfast.

“Yes, sir.” The attendant very obediently placed that huge lamb-covered tray onto the floor. Bebe immediately ran over as well. With a swipe of his sharp paws, he ripped off one of the roasted lamb’s legs.

Haeru stared at Bebe, and then he too went over and began to bite off large chunks of the roasted sheep.

“Sir, please enjoy.” The attendant placed a tray in front of Linley, and then put another tray in front of Jenne.

At the same moment, the other attendant was placing a tray in front of Keane.

Currently...

The two attendants were to each side of Keane. Keane wasn’t suspicious at all, and happily picked up his knife and his fork as he prepared to enjoy this sumptuous meal.

The two attendants exchanged glances. As though they were psychically connected, they suddenly reached out at the same time towards Keane. Their four hands were formed into claws, piercing at Keane’s chest, head, and throat.

Four hands attacking at once!

Ordinary warriors of the fifth and sixth ranks could shatter stones with a single blow. Even warriors of the fourth rank could shatter thick wooden planks.

The vital points of a weak child like Keane probably couldn’t withstand a single blow, whether it was at his head, his chest, or his throat.

They were simply too close.

The two attendants were simply too close to Keane, and they attacked from too close as well. At such a close range, even a warrior of the eighth rank wouldn’t be able to react before Keane was already dead.

Linley let out a cold snort.

A dazzling violet light suddenly flashed, then disappeared. Ear-piercing screams could be heard as the four limbs of the two attendants fell to the floor.

“Ah!!” Jenne was so scared that she jumped to her feet.

“Young master!” Only now did Lambert realize what had almost happened. He angrily kicked the two attendants into the walls, causing the walls to shake.

Those two attendants were moaning in pain. They only exchanged glances, despair in their eyes.

“You... how...” One of them stared at Linley disbelievingly.

They had been less than half a meter away from Keane. Although they were only warriors of the fourth rank, at such a close distance, they didn’t even need more than a brief instant to kill Keane.

In such a short period of time, even an expert shouldn’t be able to react fast enough.

But not only did Linley manage to react, he had been able to cut all of their arms off.

“Surprised as to why I was able to react in time?” Linley looked calmly at the two of them. “How would ordinary attendants have arms like yours?”

The two of them looked at their severed arms.

The people under the command of that red-haired man were all elite archers. As elite archers, they would often train, causing the veins and muscles in their arms in particular to be protruding.

The two attendants exchanged glances, their eyes filled with despair.

What’s more, their arm sockets were constantly leaking blood. Very soon, the two of them would definitely die of blood loss. But they knew... having failed their mission, even if Linley spared them, their captain and Madame Wade wouldn’t spare them.

“Don’t pay them any mind. We leave now.” Linley stood up.

Jenne and Keane, having experienced two assassination attempts already, didn’t have as huge a reaction to this third one as they had before. Keane said softly, “Big brother Ley, what about breakfast? Should we wrap it up and take it with us?”

“No.”

Linley shook his head. “Be careful about the food you eat in the future. I suspect all this food is poisoned.”

“Poisoned?” Keane looked at the food in his plate, terrified.

“Squeak!” Off to the side, Bebe suddenly began to squeak at Linley. Looking at Bebe, Linley couldn’t help but begin to laugh.

“Yeah, yeah, you aren’t afraid of poison. Alright?” Linley said resignedly.

Magical beasts and humans were very different, biologically. Many magical beasts contained venomous parts and sacs within their bodies to begin with. The poisons which humans feared, they might not fear at all. The more powerful a magical beast was, the stronger their natural immune system was. In addition, since magical beasts generally resided in pristine, untouched forests, they often interacted with various natural toxins from a young age. Thus, one generation after another, magical beasts’ resistance to poisons would increase.



\*

Linley’s group left the hotel very early in the morning. The red-haired man watched Linley’s group depart from afar, his face exceedingly ugly to behold.

“Ley?” The red-haired man muttered, “Where did such a powerful expert come from? And why must he travel with these two countryside-raised siblings?”

The red-haired man was extremely unhappy.

This mission to assassinate Keane and Jenne was originally quite simple. That old servant, Lambert, simply wasn’t powerful enough to do anything. But this originally simple mission suddenly became extremely difficult once that mysterious expert got involved.

“Nothing for it. I have to report to the Madame.” Knowing how powerful Linley was, the red-haired man didn’t dare to take any more risks.



\*

As the most militarily powerful empire of the Four Great Empires, the O'Brien Empire had an extremely thorough communication system sustained primarily by a special communications corps who used Bluewind Hawks.

Every single prefectural city in the O'Brien Empire had quite a few Bluewind Hawks who were controlled solely by the communications corps. Bluewind Hawks were extremely intelligent. They recognized roads and, under the orders of their owners, could take a letter to any place at all.

But only the governing clans of the O'Brien Empire had the authority to use these Bluewind Hawks. Most commoners, and even most nobles, didn't have that authority. And of course, the army had its own stand-alone communications system.

Carrying the seal of the city governor of the prefectural city of Cerre, the red-haired man requested Blackrock City to send a Bluewind Hawk towards the City of Cerre.



\*

Flying in a straight line in the air was far faster than running on the road. Not long after Linley's group had left Blackrock City, the Bluewind Hawk arrived at Cerre City.

The prefectural city of Cerre. This was a fairly large city.

In the Northwest Administrative Province, it was one of the top ten cities. At this moment, within the castle that was reserved for the city governor, the mood was very dark and very sinister.

The master of this castle was Madame Wade! An infamously cold, grim, arrogant person.

"Sis, sis!"

Two middle-aged men came running into the rear flower garden. At this moment, Madame Wade was enjoying the radiant sun while being tended to by

two serving women.

“What’s wrong, my two dear brothers?” Madame Wade lifted her head up as she looked at the two men.

“Sis, this is the mail that just came by courier. This mission was a failure,” the slightly chubbier of the two men said.

“Failed? How could Kerde be so useless?” Madame Wade took over the letter. Reading it, she began to scowl, confused. “A mysterious expert who has a black panther as a magical beast companion?”

Per what the red-haired man, Kerde, was saying, that black panther was at least a magical beast of the eighth rank, and that mysterious expert was at least a combatant of the eighth rank, and perhaps even the ninth.

Madame Wade suddenly felt that the letter was extremely heavy.

“Sis, what should we do?” Madame Wade’s eldest brother, that chubby man, asked. Madame Wade’s second brother also looked at her hopefully.

Madame Wade frowned as she considered the issue.

“My two brothers, please request the services of Apothecary Holmer,” Madame Wade said calmly.

“Holmer? That old freak?” her second brother immediately cried out in surprise.

Madame Wade said coldly, “According to Kerde’s investigations, this mysterious ‘Ley’ fellow is at least a combatant of the eighth rank, perhaps even of the ninth. I don’t have the ability to kill a combatant of the ninth rank face to face. It’s best to have Apothecary Holmer take care of this affair. After all, Apothecary Holmer has killed a combatant of the ninth rank before.”

“But Holmer...” Madame Wade’s eldest brother hesitated as well.

“Hmph. If the two of you keep on acting like this, you’ll never accomplish anything. Even if I kill Keane, if you two act like this, do you think you will be fit to be city governors?” Madame Wade snorted coldly.

“Fine, sis. We’ll go speak to Apothecary Holmer right now!” Madame Wade’s two older brothers submitted to her.



\*

‘Apothecary Holmer’ was a title which Holmer had given himself.

Others viewed Holmer as a murderer, but Holmer viewed himself as an Apothecary.

And indeed, Holmer’s abilities in preserving life were quite high. Holmer was almost three hundred years old now. For a warrior of the sixth rank to live for nearly three hundred years was nearly impossible, but Holmer had done so. What’s more, Holmer looked as though he was in quite good shape. This was because Holmer often used various bizarre concoctions, allowing his three-hundred-year-old body to be as strong and healthy as a young man’s.

“Huh. Madame Wade is quite generous. This business transaction... I accept, I accept.” Holmer stroked his graying beard, laughing delightedly.

In front of Holmer, Madame Wade’s two brothers were still rather nervous.

“Apothecary Homer, it would be best if you act quickly,” Madame Wade’s eldest brother urged. “Our people will deliver you to your target.”

“Haha, first give me a down payment. I’ll head out right away afterwards.” Holmer laughed loudly.

“Down payment?” The two brothers looked at each other.

In the prefectural city of Cerre, the two of them had never been treated like this before. But after learning a bit about Holmer, the two brothers didn’t dare to irritate this elderly, self-proclaimed ‘Apothecary’. Once this old man got angry, no one knew how many people might die as a result.

## The Yulan River

The greatest river within the Yulan continent was, without a doubt, the Yulan River. The Yulan River's main stream flowed through the O'Brien Empire, the Yulan Empire, the Rhine Empire, and the Rohault Empire. Its countless tributaries were densely spread across each of the four empires.

It would be fair to say that the Yulan River nourished and gave life to over half of humanity.

"What a wide river." Seated on the deck of a multi-level ship, Linley stared with awe at the vast, turgid waters of the Yulan River.

This ship had been employed by Linley for his usage alone.

He spent ten thousand gold coins to have it take the group directly to the harbor nearest to Cerre City. That harbor was less than a hundred kilometers from Cerre.

As Linley had explained it, if they continued on their originally planned route, who knows how many more assassination attempts they would have to endure? It was better for them to directly commission a boat to take them southwards through the Yulan River.

This boat had been commissioned by Linley on the spot. Linley didn't believe that the people who worked on this ship all belonged to Madame Wade's forces. Madame Wade's influence did not, after all, hold much sway near Blackrock City.

"Big brother Ley." Jenne came out of the ship's cabin.

In the middle of this river, the wind was very strong. It blew against Jenne's long hair and long dress. Smiling, Jenne looked at Linley. Walking next to him, she sat down as well. "Big brother Ley, to think that originally, I had wanted to employ you for ten thousand gold coins." Jenne said these words with quite



some embarrassment.

To Jenne and Keane, ten thousand gold coins was an enormous sum of money.

But how could they have imagined that Linley would go ahead and specially commission the services of this ship? The amount of money it cost to specially commission a large ship such as this was quite high. Although the distance between Cerre and Blackrock was not that far, the cost was ten thousand gold coins. And what's more, this was an extremely discounted price that they had given Linley as a show of respect to him, a powerful combatant who had a black panther for a companion.

So far, Linley had taken only a single gold coin out of the ten thousand gold coins he had been promised as his 'hiring fee'. But by now, he himself had already spent ten thousand gold coins on them. It was only natural that Jenne felt embarrassed! Jenne and her brother had wanted to pay for the boat themselves... but of course, they currently had no money.

"Jenne, don't you think that the scenery here is quite beautiful?" Linley walked to the end of the deck, which was surrounded by protective steel chains. Linley rested his hands against the steel chains, looking at the surroundings.

The rolling waves of the Yulan River could be seen for kilometers about. At its widest, the Yulan River was several kilometers wide; at its narrowest, it was still hundreds of meters wide. This was the 'mother river' for the entire Yulan continent. Who knows how many people it had given life to? The recorded history of the Yulan continent had stretched back for hundreds of thousands of years.

"This Yulan River must have existed for hundreds of thousands of years as well." Gazing at the turgid river waters, Linley couldn't help but imagine what it would've been like, hundreds of thousands of years ago. As he lost himself within this massive, boundless river, Linley felt his heart become unbounded as well.

"The people and kingdoms from hundreds of thousands of years back have turned to dust long ago. Compared to the endless march of history, where

kingdoms and empires rise then collapse, personal grudges and enmities are so meaningless and small.”

Facing this vast river, Linley had a very strange feeling.

“Right now, the Yulan continent has six major political entities. The Four Great Empires, the Holy Union, and the Dark Alliance.” Linley’s heart was extremely calm.

Ever since he was young, Linley’s goals had been to realize his father’s dreams, and to stand at the highest levels of training and power.

But after his father died, Linley’s heart had fallen into a dark abyss. He had embarked on a road to revenge, a road of slaughter... and on this road, Linley had lost his Grandpa Doehring.

The three years of training he had spent in the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts and his communing with nature had allowed nature to cleanse his soul. His heart was now as calm as still water, and he had transformed, like a butterfly emerging from its cocoon.

“Only by reaching the pinnacle of power can one realize one’s dreams. Despite being such an enormous organization, when the Holy Union came face to face with that Dylin, didn’t they choose to retreat?”

Linley had total confidence in himself.

“There will come a day when I, too, will reach those heights.” Staring at the raging waves, Linley felt nothing but great ambitions, as boundless as the river.



\*

The captain of this ship had an extremely easy life. Although the rapids of the Yulan River were rather fast, it was still far safer than the sea. The captain even had time to casually chat with his sailors.

“Hey, did you guys see that black panther?” The captain said delightedly, “That’s a magical beast. You just wait and see. My own son will tame a magical beast of his own soon.”

“Captain, that’s a panther-type magical beast. Do you think your son could tame one of those?” The nearby sailors began to laugh. There wasn’t too much of a social stratification between a captain and his sailors. Both were men who made their livings on the sea.

The captain sighed emotionally. “High-class magical beasts. I really admire those people who can tame one. I remember how last year, when we went to the imperial capital, I saw the War God’s College accept new honorary disciples. Wow. You have no idea how many experts were there. Some were mounted on enormous magical beasts, while others were seated on flying magical beasts... so many experts all rushed there, struggling to be the one to qualify for that sole slot. Those battles and those movements between the experts... all I saw were blurs. They were too fast, too fast.”

The sailors all began to make wild boasts about the experts they had seen before.

In the O’Brien Empire, every single child wanted to become a powerful combatant, with being recruited by the War God’s College being their ultimate goal.



\*

Linley was seated meditatively on the wooden deck, allowing the wind to blow against him. His adamantite heavy sword was on his legs. His eyes closed, Linley was quietly attuning with the boundless vastness of the Yulan River’s waters.

“The power to impose is the power of the heavens, the power of the earth, the power of the boundless oceans.” Linley’s spirit had become one with the wind. He almost felt as though he could sense the vast riverbed of the Yulan River as well as the boundless land surrounding it. Naturally, he could also sense that rushing river as well.

The ship continued to sail forward. They did stop occasionally in their journey so as to allow everyone to have some food, but Linley remained in the meditative posture on the deck, not eating at all.

In the blink of an eye, six days had passed. “Sis, is big bro Ley gonna be ok? He hasn’t eaten or drank anything.” Keane pointed at Linley, who was still in the meditative posture, as he worriedly asked Jenne.

Jenne was somewhat worried as well, but she shook her head helplessly. “I don’t know either. Bebe won’t let us get near him though.”

“Don’t worry.” The captain of the ship walked over, chuckling. “Those high-level experts aren’t like us ordinary folks. To them, even traversing a precipice ten thousand fathoms deep is of no issue. Not even a million-man army can stop them. I’ve heard of people who, in the course of their meditative training, neither ate nor drank for months. At their level, not eating or drinking for months is actually quite normal.” Although the captain used the word ‘normal’ when he spoke, a trace of envy was in his eyes.

Hearing the ship captain’s words, Jenne and Keane began to feel even more astonished.

“Can it be?” Suddenly, a murmur could be heard. Jenne, Keane, and the captain all turned their heads towards Linley, and when they did, they were shocked. Holding the adamantine heavy sword in his hands, Linley jumped directly into the river.

“Big brother Ley!” Jenne shouted in alarm. The three of them immediately ran over to the deck. Running to those locked steel chains, they stared down. To their amazement, they saw that Linley was currently standing on top of the water, the adamantine heavy sword in his hands. He floated up and down with the waves, but didn’t sink down at all. This sight stunned them all and left them gaping in shock. Mid-air flight was something only a person at the Saint level could do.

“Earth... fire... water... wind...” Linley murmured in a quiet voice, and then suddenly, he thrust his adamantine black sword towards the sky. As the adamantine heavy sword shot up, it seemed as though a hole had been pierced in the sky, as a dreadful, screeching howl could be heard from the air.

At the same time, all the water surrounding Linley suddenly erupted skywards like a geyser.

“Haha.” Linley laughed loudly and happily, and then his body could be seen

constantly moving and spinning about amidst the waves. The river water seemed to follow Linley's movements, as the heavy sword constantly shrieked and howled with each stroke.

All the river water in an area of a hundred meters around Linley had gone wild.

Sometimes, the water would all rise tens of meters into the sky, while at other times, they would form a giant whirlpool. Other times, the water would shoot out like sharp arrows in every direction, while at other times, it would just circle around Linley...

"Clang." A crisp, clear sound rang out from the heavy sword entering its sheath.

Those wild waters suddenly calmed down. In the blink of an eye, the Yulan River once more returned to its ordinary state, with just a few lingering effects. Striding on the waves, Linley didn't sink down at all.

But this time, Linley wasn't using his wind magic to counteract the effects of the weight of the adamantite heavy sword.

Rather, he was using his new insights on how to 'impose'.

"This 'imposing' force was the force of the heavens. It is also the force of the enormous earth and the boundless seas." A hint of a smile was on Linley's face. With a gentle leap, Linley vaulted back onto the deck of the ship.

This entire time, Linley had been focusing on understanding 'impose' through his affinity to earth and wind. But over the course of these six days of meditation, Linley was able to sense the movements of the waves, and he also remembered the blazing passion of the fire elemental essences in fire magic.

Dense, graceful, pliable, and passionate.

When the aspects of these four elements were merged with each other in a sword stroke, they could make the universe move. This was what 'impose' truly meant. In the past, Linley's understanding of 'impose' was nothing more than the most rudimentary of understandings.

"Big brother Ley, just now, what were you— what was...?" Keane was very

excited, but he didn't know what to say.

Jenne was looking at Linley with awe as well.

What Linley had just done had truly stunned them. Even the captain, who was well-travelled and worldly, had never seen such an awesome spectacle.

"Just training," Linley said with a calm smile.

Although in the records of his clan, the highest level of using heavy weapons was this third level of 'impose', Linley suddenly had a certain feeling.

'Impose' was not the end of the road.

There was something even greater than that.

After reaching the 'impose' level, and in particular, after his soul could become attuned to nature, Linley always had this feeling... that there were even more profound truths awaiting him. Linley could dimly sense them, but he had no way of actually comprehending them.

"Battle-qi and brute strength are only the most basic of building blocks. In order for one's attacks to become more powerful, having a deep grasp of these profound principles is extremely important."

You might possess the power to lift something that weighed a million pounds, but if your movements were too stupid and clumsy, you might only be able to unleash 10% of your total power.

After training hard, you might be able to unleash 30%.

Experts would be able to unleash 70%.

But what Linley wanted to do was to unleash 100%. And, borrowing from the 'imposing force' of the universe itself, strike blows that were more powerful than he himself was physically capable of.

"Jenne, Keane, how far are we from the shore?" Linley asked.

"We are another day off," the nearby captain replied.

Linley nodded, then instructed, "How about this. Let's not get off too close to Cerre City. Let's get off at the harbor one stop removed from Cerre City."

"Yes, Lord Ley." Although the ship captain didn't understand the reason, he

still agreed.



\*

Linley's choice to travel by river had thrown all of Madame Wade's forces into a state of confusion. That red-haired man, Kerde, in the end had managed to learn that Linley's group had travelled by ship and were advancing through the Yulan River.

No matter how powerful Apothecary Holmer was, he couldn't just leap past a river that was hundreds of meters across at its narrowest and get onto the opponent's boat, right? Even if he was able to get on the boat, they would no doubt be highly suspicious of his intentions.

Thus, they could only lie in ambush at the port, as if they were waiting for a hare to fall into their snare.

However...

Based on their calculations, the ship should've already arrived by now.

"What's going on? Shouldn't they have arrived yesterday?" Apothecary Holmer was resting in a commoner's house in a town that was located quite near the port.

"Master Holmer, please wait a bit longer." Madame Wade's subordinates were extremely frantic as well.

Suddenly, the door to the residence swung open, and one of Madame Wade's subordinates rushed in. He angrily said, "Master Holmer, they didn't stop at this harbor; they stopped at the previous one. They have already reached a small city named Redsand which is quite near Cerre City. Most likely, they will reach the prefectural city of Cerre by tonight.

"They are arriving tonight?" Apothecary Holmer was startled.

"Quick, we need to head out immediately," Apothecary Holmer immediately ordered, and the entire group frantically hurried back in the direction of the prefectural city of Cerre.

## Poison Gas Fluttering in the Wind

The City of Redsand was a small one, and there were only a few tens of thousands of people within it.

When Linley's group left the boat, they headed directly towards the prefectural city of Cerre. On the way there, they stopped by Redsand City, preparing to have a quick lunch.

In a private room in the second floor of a hotel, Jenne and Keane both had excited smiles on their faces.

"Haha, by tonight, we will reach Cerre City. By then, we'll have much fewer troubles." Keane chortled.

Jenne nodded as well. "Once we reach Cerre City, our aunt probably wouldn't openly move against us, right?"

"Jenne, Keane, things won't be as easy as you think." Linley laughed calmly. "Once we reach Cerre City, it will actually be even more dangerous. Your so-called aunt isn't as timid and fearful as you seem to think she is."

When women decided to be venomous, they could be extremely terrifying.

During his three years in the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, Linley had encountered all sorts of cruel, vicious people. Jenne's aunt was totally capable of having Keane killed within Cerre City, and in a manner which didn't implicate her at all.

"Really?" Keane was somewhat afraid now. After all, he was a fourteen-year-old boy.

Linley laughed. "But don't worry too much. There's no need for us to rush to Cerre City this afternoon. Let's have a good rest in Redsand City first. Tomorrow morning, we will head out."

"Tomorrow morning?" Jenne and Keane both looked at Linley.



“If my predictions are correct, the people your aunt undoubtedly stationed at the river have already discovered that we disembarked one harbor early. They should be able to calculate that we would arrive at Cerre City at around nightfall. Thus... there is an 80% to 90% chance that they will be waiting for us there, tonight.”

Linley could easily deduce such simple stratagems.

As long as one could think things through from another’s perspective, one could easily lead them by the nose.

“Let’s rest up and recover our strength. Tomorrow morning, we head out.” Linley laughed loudly. “There’s no rush right now. Let’s have a good lunch.”

Jenne and Keane revealed hints of smiles on their faces.



\*

Indeed, as Linley had predicted, Apothecary Holmer and his group had headed directly for Cerre City. Madame Wade’s people in Cerre City had received this information as well.

On the walls of Cerre City.

Madame Wade was leaning on a parapet, staring outside the city. Behind her were her two brothers as well as Apothecary Holmer. As for the city guards, they had all scattered at her command.

“Mr. Holmer, I’ll have to trouble you to wait here tonight for a while.” Madame Wade turned her head towards Holmer, smiling.

Apothecary Holmer knew his own limits.

He personally wasn’t that powerful. The most powerful weapon available to him was his poisons. Naturally, he wouldn’t want to offend this malicious person in front of him, who was the true power in Cerre City.

“Madame Wade, don’t worry. Those siblings definitely will not live to arrive at Cerre City.”

Holmer was very confident. “Even if they have an escort who is of the ninth

rank, hmph. As long as he hasn't reached the Saint level, I am confident in my ability to deal with him. But of course... he can't already know who I am."

If a combatant of the ninth rank were to recognize him and activate his battle-qi, the battle-qi would be sufficient to easily repel the poison.

"Mr. Holmer, all these years, you've resided here in Cerre City. You aren't a person who likes to show yourself either. How many people could have possibly seen you? What's more, I've heard that you, Mr. Holmer, possess the ability to change your appearance?" Madame Wade laughed as she looked at Holmer.

Holmer laughed happily. Stroking his beard, he said, "Haha. Madame Wade, change my appearance? You praise me too highly. All I do is to use some medicinal concoctions to change the color of my skin and hair. And then a little makeup... even people who know me, as long as they don't carefully inspect me, won't be able to recognize me."

Madame Wade smiled as she nodded. "Then I leave everything in your hands, Mr. Holmer. Tonight, I will stay in the nearby hotel and await your good news."

Holmer laughed confidently.



\*

But as time went on, Madame Wade, who was in that hotel nearest to the city walls, was beginning to grow confused. Because quite soon, the city gates would close for the night.

The rule of Cerre City was that at ten o'clock sharp, the gates would be shut.

But Jenne and Keane's group still had yet to arrive. Based on Madame Wade's information, Jenne's group had arrived at Redsand City by lunchtime. Even if they travelled slowly, they should've reached here by now.

Ten o'clock arrived.

Those enormous city gates began to slowly close as a large number of guards pushed at them. Apothecary Holmer, who had meticulously prepared for this battle, descended from the walls with a belly full of anger. Madame Wade also

walked out of the hotel.

“Madame Wade, what is this?” Holmer was truly upset now.

After receiving the news, he had run all the way back from the harbor to the city. The bumpy, long ride was quite miserable for this three-hundred-year-old Holmer.

And then, he had stood up there on the walls for half the night, with the icy wind blowing at him the entire time.

And now, the city gates were shutting. But no one came.

“Who knows what is going on with that group of people. I’m afraid they might have taken a rest at Redsand City. Mr. Holmer, why don’t you rest here at the hotel tonight? Let’s see what tomorrow brings.” Madame Wade was not in a good mood either.

“That’s the only option we have right now.” Holmer was extremely disgruntled.



\*

The next dawn, just as the city gates opened, Holmer began to quietly wait for them to arrive. By nine o’clock in the morning, Holmer was truly furious.

Holmer rushed down from the city walls and charged directly into the second floor of the hotel.

“Madame Wade. If they aren’t coming to us, I’ll go to them,” Holmer said directly. “Give me some men, at least one of whom recognizes those two siblings.”

Madame Wade approved of this idea. “Alright. Then I’ll have to trouble you, Mr. Holmer, to make this trip.”

“This time, I really have to give these people a taste of my power,” Holmer said quietly, his eyes filled with a murderous look.

After purchasing a carriage in Redsand City, Jenne and Keane entered the carriage, with the old servant, Lambert, being the driver. As for Linley, he rode

on the back of his Blackcloud Panther, Haeru.

Haeru was more than two meters tall and very broad-backed. His fur was very smooth and soft as well.

Riding on the Blackcloud Panther, Linley couldn't feel any bumps in the road at all. The ride was far more comfortable than that of a horse or a carriage. What's more, the Blackcloud Panther ran up mountains as easily as it ran on prairies.

"Big brother Ley. What time is it now?" Keane poked his head out of the carriage and asked Linley.

Linley glanced at him. "Don't be impatient. It's only ten o'clock. We most likely we'll arrive at Cerre City by eleven o'clock."

The Blackcloud Panther that Linley was riding on was very awe-inspiring. Everyone on the road who saw Linley all moved aside early on to allow Linley the right of way.

"Giddyup, giddyup!"

From far away, the sound of hoof steps could be heard. Soon, three mounted knights could be seen in the distance, but as soon as they saw Linley, all three were terrified and came to a halt.

"What a massive panther." One of the knights sighed, staring at the black panther Linley was riding.

"Stop staring. Let's move," the other knight said.

Just at this time, another stallion trotted past them. This stallion was ridden by a kindly looking old hunchback with pure white hair. The speed of the old man's horse was fairly slow, and it clip-clopped its way forward.

"Haha, look at him. He's so old, but still rides a horse. Haha..." One of the knights laughed loudly.

"Let's go. We have business to attend to."

The three knights laughed calmly, continuing on their way. Right at this time, that hunchbacked old man raised his head to glance at Linley's group. This hunchback immediately understood.

Per their pre-arranged agreement, if they encountered the targets, the knights would say, “Haha, look at him. He’s so old, but still rides a horse.” What’s more, Holmer also knew that the mysterious expert had a black panther as a pet.



\*

“Those three knights don’t have any knightly chivalry at all,” Keane, who had seen all this through the window, said unhappily once the three knights left.

But Linley frowned as he stared at the hunchback.

The hunchback rode the horse in a manner that did indeed inspire concern. Just from the look of him, one could tell that he was extremely old. Although the horse wasn’t moving too fast, the hunchback continued to sway back and forth on the horse’s back, as though he could fall off at any moment. His legs didn’t seem to be too firmly clamped on the horse’s back either.

Right at this moment, a carriage appeared from behind the old hunchback as well.

“F\*ck off, you old fart,” one of the knights cursed loudly. The hunchback immediately whipped his horse, moving it to the side of the road.

“Ahhh!”

When the horse was roughly ten or so meters away from Linley’s group, the old hunchback swayed again and fell off his horse.

“The old grandpa fell off!” Keane, seeing this from through the window, immediately pushed open the door to come out and help.

But just as the old man fell off, a light blue wave of gas emanated from his body. That light blue gas was extremely thin and light, so much so that if someone wasn’t specifically looking for it, it would be quite hard to discern.

The wind just so happened to be blowing from the east, and it blew the gas directly towards Linley. But of course, the first people to be impacted by the poison gas was the people in the carriage that had just passed by.

“Crumple.”

One knight after another collapsed from their horses to the ground, fresh blood leaking out of their noses.

“Hrm?” Linley also felt that something in his body seemed off, and his head felt a little dizzy.

“Not good. Poison.” Attuned to the wind, Linley could clearly sense that a light blue poisonous gas was wafting in his direction. By now, Linley had already taken two breaths of it.

The Dragonblood battle-qi in Linley’s body immediately rose up, absorbing all of the poisonous gas in Linley’s body, with none of it harming him at all.

This poisonous gas was a poison that Holmer had specifically designed to be used against humans, based on human biology.

But Holmer could never have imagined that Linley was very different, biologically speaking, from ordinary people. Within his veins was the bloodline of the Dragonblood Warriors, an ancestral bloodline that was many times more exalted than even the bloodlines of magical beasts. In the past, even the magicite core of the Armored Razorback Wyrms had been absorbed and consumed by just the small amount of dragonblood that was in Linley’s veins at that time.

Normal people simply couldn’t imagine or understand the special abilities and attributes of each of the Four Supreme Warriors.

This sort of poison gas couldn’t hurt a Dragonblood Warrior at all.

“Wind.”

Based on his mastery of wind elemental essence granted to him by being a wind-style magus, Linley immediately controlled the air around him to blow the wind backwards. The poisonous gas immediately blew back towards the east. By now, the squad of knights that were between the ‘hunchback’ Holmer and Linley had all died.

The poisonous gas blew back towards Holmer, but he didn’t dodge. He was not afraid of his own poisons. But what he was afraid of... was Linley.

“Giddyup, giddyup!” Holmer suddenly became quite agile, leaping back onto his horse and then sending it galloping east as fast as he could.

“Haeru,” Linley said in a cold voice.

“Swoooooosh.”

The Blackcloud Panther’s speed was terrifyingly fast, many times faster than an ordinary stallion.

In the blink of an eye, he traversed several hundred meters, and actually passed by Holmer, landing in front of him. All that had been visible during this motion was a black blur.

Seeing Linley suddenly appear in front of him, Holmer immediately grew frantic.

“My friend, I was paid by others to do this. If you are willing to spare me, I will give you as much gold as you wish.” Although Holmer was more than three hundred years old, he didn’t want to die yet.

Thinking back to what just happened, Linley still felt afraid.

Fortunately, he had managed to react in time and blow the poison gas back before it had entered the carriage.

“Poison gas? Are you a necromancer?” Linley looked at Holmer.

“Necromancer?” Holmer was startled, then shook his head. “No. I’m an apothecary. My friend, I am quite wealthy. Ten thousand gold coins? Twenty thousand? Or perhaps, a hundred thousand?” At a time like this, Holmer was still trying to save money.

But Linley couldn’t even be bothered to speak to him.

“Haeru, deal with it.”

Linley hopped off the black panther, heading back towards the carriage. As for the Blackcloud Panther, he revealed his sharp fangs, and then pounced directly towards Holmer.

“Ah! A million! Ten million! Ah!!!!” Before Holmer had even finished calling out, he had been flattened by a single blow from the Blackcloud Panther’s

massive paw.



## The Prefectural City of Cerre

The desolate wilderness.

The tens of people escorting the carriage were all dead. The black blood oozing from their bodies made the scene all the more sinister. Holmer, in turn, had been smashed to death by a single blow from Haeru. Jenne and Keane, who had watched this all from the carriage, were totally stunned.

“Big brother Ley.” Keane called out in alarm. Jenne’s face was rather pale as well.

Just as Linley was about to respond, that old servant, Lambert, who was driving the carriage suddenly called out in surprise as he stared at the corpse of Holmer. “Him! He’s the deadliest killer in Cerre City, Holmer. That old freak who styled himself an apothecary.”

“Holmer? Grandpa Lambert, who are you talking about?” Keane looked at Lambert.

Lambert took a deep breath. “Young master, young miss, this Holmer was an extremely dangerous individual within Cerre City. In the past, when I was serving your mother in the city, I encountered him a few times. At the time, Count Wade had mentioned this Holmer to your mother as well. This Holmer is an extremely skilled user of poisons. Although he is only a warrior of the sixth rank, he once killed a combatant of the ninth rank.”

Only now did Jenne and Keane understand.

Linley, listening to the side, nodded as well.

“This Holmer is extremely greedy. Most likely, his actions this time were at the direction of the senior madame as well.” Lambert’s face was extremely solemn. “The senior madame really has her mind set on killing you!”

“With big brother Ley, we have nothing to fear!” Keane was very confident.

Jenne also looked confidently at Linley.

“Enough. Let’s head out immediately so we can arrive sooner at Cerre City,” Linley said directly. Linley’s group immediately made haste towards the prefectural city of Cerre, leaving behind a cloud of dust on the desolate road.

The prefectural city of Cerre. This was a city with around two to three hundred thousand people. Its red walls stretched off into the distance. In terms of architecture, the buildings of Cerre City tended towards the ornate.

Keane pushed open the door to the carriage. Seeing the beautiful, majestic city in front of them, Keane’s heart was filled with boundless ambition. His eyes lit up, and he said, “From this day forth, I shall be the master of this prefectural city.”

Outside the city gates.

“Black panther?” When the gate guards saw Linley’s mount from the distance, they had immediately called out to the other guards nearby, “Quick, someone go speak with the madame. The person she spoke of is arriving.”

“Okay.”

A gate guard immediately ran towards the hotel located nearest to the city gates, rushing up to the second floor. At this moment, there was a warrior stationed outside the stairway. Seeing that it was a gate guard who was running this way, the warrior allowed him passage.

“Madame Countess.” The guard fell respectfully to one knee.

“Madame Countess, the expert riding a black panther which you spoke of has arrived. There is a carriage behind him.”

“What?” Before Madame Wade had reacted, her two brothers who were standing behind her called out in alarm.

Madame Wade frowned. “Leave for now.”

“Yes.” The guard respectfully withdrew.

Right now, both of Madame Wade’s brothers were growing frantic. Her eldest brother hurriedly said, “Sis, they actually survived their journey to Cerre. Can it be that Holmer, that old freak, failed?”

“Hard to say.”

Madame Wade was frowning. “Perhaps that expert with the black panther who was escorting those two countryside-raised siblings didn’t come on the main road from Redsand City. Perhaps they intentionally took a detour and caused Holmer and the others to miss them.”

Hearing her words, her two brothers couldn’t help but nod.

Indeed, it was very possible that their opponents had craftily taken a roundabout path en route to Cerre City.

“Then what should we now do?” Madame Wade’s two brothers looked at her.

“Go down and welcome them.” A hint of a smile was on Madame Wade’s face. “My two darling children have returned, after suffering for so many years. They are finally back. As their loving aunt, how can I not go welcome them?”

And as she spoke, Madame Wade headed down the stairs.

Right as they walked out of the main door of the hotel, Madame Wade saw the tall and sturdy man with a heavy sword on his back who was riding a handsome black panther, as well as the familiar face of Lambert.

“Oh, Lambert, long time no see,” Madame Wade immediately called out in a high-pitched voice.

Linley, Jenne, Keane, and Lambert all swung their heads to look at her. Lambert started, then respectfully said, “Senior madame.”

Madame Wade laughed warmly. “These two children should be Jenne and Keane. Jenne is even more beautiful than before, and she looks more like her mother now as well. Keane isn’t the child that he used to be either. He’s even more handsome now.”

Jenne and Keane could both recognize Madame Wade.

Although nearly eight years had passed, Madame Wade’s appearance hadn’t changed much, with the exception of a slight wrinkle at the corner of her eyes.

“Senior madame.” Jenne and Keane both paid their respects.

“Wonderful, wonderful. And there’s no need to stand on courtesy.” Madame

Wade chortled, then looked at Linley. "And this is?"

"This is big brother Ley," Keane hurriedly answered.

"Ley?" Madame Wade's eyelids flickered, then she laughed. "Oh, Mr. Ley. I imagine it must have been you who protected and escorted them to Cerre City. I absolutely must thank you on behalf of Jenne and Keane. Come, let's all go to the castle. Tonight, I am going to arrange a magnificent banquet for my two poor little children."

The castle of the city governor was a square block, and was quite an imposing sight.

"What a useless fellow." After hearing the news that the messenger knights had delivered, Madame Wade was even more furious.

Holmer had been a chess piece that she had trusted.

But now that Holmer had failed, Madame Wade felt extremely frustrated.

"With that Mr. Ley present, it will be very hard for me to kill Keane." Madame Wade was extremely angry. "Poison? The poison used by ordinary poison experts won't be able to escape detection. Assassins? How many can deal with this Ley?"

Madame Wade's eyes slowly sharpened.

"Looks like there's only that one method left." The worry disappeared from Madame Wade's eyes. The only thing left was confidence and callousness.

Within the enormous dining room of the castle, the giant glass chandelier had been lit, casting its resplendent, bewitching light upon the room. All of the nobles of Cerre City were present today.

"I've heard that Count Wade's son has returned. I wonder how Madame Wade will deal with this."

"Who knows? But Madame Wade definitely will not give up her authority."

"Madame Wade is extremely vicious. Sadly for her, her baby boy died in the arms of a woman. What a joke." The various nobles chatted in soft tones.

Whom amongst them did not know that Madame Wade was a tyrannical,

domineering woman? But since they lived in Cerre City, at most they would mock her in private. They didn't dare to publicly offend her.

"Madame Wade has arrived."

Instantly, all of the gossiping nobles ceased their discourse. They all turned to look towards Madame Wade, who had just descended from the stairway. Madame Wade still looked as stately and arrogant as she ever had.

Madame Wade enjoyed the attention of the people present. She tilted her head up slightly as she descended.

"Everyone," Madame Wade laughed. "Today is a joyous occasion. Those two poor children of mine, who have suffered outside for eight years, have finally returned today."

At this time, two more people suddenly appeared at the stairway.

One was a young man wearing a black gentleman's suit, while the other was a golden-haired young lady wearing a white, full-bodied dress. They came out together, and the eyes of many nobles lit up.

Although Jenne was dressed very simply, when matched with her appearance, her figure, and her kind, innocent demeanor, she was a soul-stirring sight. Many young nobles present made up their minds to go over later and ask who that girl was.

"Jenne, Keane, come," Madame Wade called out to them warmly.

Jenne and Keane walked down the stairway together, standing on each side of Madame Wade. Madame Wade called out warmly, "This is Jenne. Look, what a beautiful girl she is. And this handsome young man is Keane." Madame Wade sighed emotionally. "Jenne and Keane have finally escaped their bitter lives. But their mother, my dear sister..." Madame Wade's eyes grew red, as though she were about to cry.

"Senior madame, if the second madame knew how much you cared about her, she would undoubtedly be very moved," an ancient voice rang out, and Lambert walked in with Linley by his side.

Madame Wade glanced at Lambert.

Lambert was previously the second madame's most faithful servant. Even after the second madame had fallen into dire straits, he continued to follow her without complaint.

Jenne and Keane felt extremely unhappy as well.

They knew that the reason for their mother's deaths and those eight bitter years they had suffered were all caused by this senior madame in front of them. Jenne knew how to hide her thoughts, but the fourteen-year-old Keane ridiculed angrily, "Senior madame, why didn't you ever come visit us during these eight years? We've missed you so terribly."

Madame Wade's facial expression didn't change at all. She sighed, "All these years, I've been working on behalf of Cerre City, and I've never had time. Every time I think about this, I feel I've mistreated the two of you."

Linley suddenly laughed and said directly, "Madame Wade, Count Wade has now passed away, and Keane is his successor. The reason he has returned this time is to assume the position of city governor. Madame Wade, I wonder if you have already decided on a date for Keane to assume the city governor's position?"

Everyone in the dining room fell silent upon hearing these words.

All of the nobles present knew that the main act of the play was starting.

At the same time, all of the nobles stared at Linley in puzzlement. They didn't know where this youngster had come from, for him to dare to so boldly and directly say these words.

"Mr. Ley," Madame Wade's face grew hard, and she said coldly, "As their aunt, I must thank you for escorting Jenne and Keane to Cerre City. But the question of Keane taking over the governorship is an internal affair of our clans. It isn't very appropriate for you, an outsider, to get involved, is it?"

Keane immediately refuted, "And who says big brother Ley is an outsider?"

"If he isn't an outsider, what is he?" Madame Wade's face was very cold.

Keane was startled, then he looked up at Linley and said, "Big brother Ley is, is, is my sister's fiancé. How could he be an outsider?"

“Fiancé?” Madame Wade was flabbergasted.

Jenne was flabbergasted.

Linley was flabbergasted.

“Fiancé?” Linley immediately looked at Keane. Keane only winked at Linley. Linley immediately understood what Keane meant.

Right at this moment, Jenne’s face turned red.

“How about that?” Keane arrogantly tilted his head up. “My brother-in-law to be is qualified to discuss this, isn’t he? Aunt, my father is dead, as is my elder brother. I am now the primary successor.”

Madame Wade was silent.

All of the people present looked at Madame Wade. Keane’s position as primary successor to the governorship was indisputable and protected by imperial law. They wanted to see how Madame Wade would handle it.

“Haha, Keane, what’s the rush?” Madame Wade laughed. “Your father is dead, and you are his only surviving son. Naturally, you are his primary successor. The governorship is yours, of course. No one will take it from you.”

Linley looked suspiciously at Madame Wade.

Linley wasn’t alone. Everyone’s hearts were filled with suspicion. Madame Wade wasn’t the sort to so easily give up.

“Then thank you, aunt.” Keane smiled. “Then when shall I assume the governorship?”

Madame Wade chuckled, “No rush, no rush. Right now, Keane, you aren’t of age yet. How about this. In two years, when you reach the age of maturity, you can assume the governorship.”

“Two years later?” Keane stared.

Madame Wade was beaming. “Keane, be a good boy. You aren’t of age yet. You don’t have enough ability to manage a city. Don’t worry. Two years from now, you will definitely be the governor of the prefectural city of Cerre.”

## Search and Seizure

Assume the governorship two years from now? Who knows what would happen within these two years? How could Keane endure two years under the rule of Madame Wade?

“I think I already have the necessary ability,” Keane said firmly.

Madame Wade’s face turned slightly more solemn. “Keane, be calm. You are still only a child. The governor of the prefectural city of Cerre is in charge of hundreds of thousands of citizens. Right now, you aren’t capable of assuming this heavy responsibility.”

At this time, Jenne, who was next to Keane, spoke. “Aunt, imperial law makes no requirements with regards to a person having to be of the age of maturity before assuming a governorship.”

Madame Wade looked at Jenne.

Not backing down in the slightest, Jenne stared back at Madame Wade. The two women of different ages just stared at each other.

“True.” Madame Wade laughed. “Imperial law does not openly state that one must be of age before assuming the governorship of a city. However...”

Madame Wade seemed a bit saddened. “Not long ago, after your father passed away, when the clan learned about this news, they had originally planned to let your elder brother assume the governorship. But alas, my poor child...”

“After they learned that Keane was only fourteen, the clan ordered that as the prefectural city of Cerre was one of the important prefectural cities of the Northwest Administrative Province, and is located very close to the provincial capital of Basil, the management of Cerre is an important matter. The clan ordered that Keane must be of age before assuming the governorship.”



“The clan?”

Jenne and Keane were both startled.

Hearing this order from ‘the clan’, both Jenne and Keane were caught off-guard. As a collateral descendant of the Jacques clan, Jenne and Keane knew what it meant for the clan to issue an order.

“Aunt, did the clan truly issue such a decree?” Jenne stared at Madame Wade.

Madame Wade frowned as she looked at Jenne. “Jenne. Do you think I would dare to make a false decree on behalf of the clan? Mm. Before Keane is able to assume the governorship, all matters in the prefectural city are for me to manage.”

“As the future governor, I have the authority to select my own steward,” Keane called out unhappily.

Madame Wade stared coldly towards Keane.

Right at this time, Linley, who had been silent the entire time, suddenly spoke. “Madame Wade. The clan that you spoke of didn’t issue the order for you specifically to be the steward of the city on behalf of the governor, did they?”

Madame Wade was stunned.

No matter how daring she was, she didn’t dare to fabricate an order from the clan.

Jenne and Keane were both members of the Jacques clan by blood, while the Jacques clan itself was one of the most powerful, flourishing clans within the O’Brien Empire.

The entire Northwest Administrative Province, one of the seven great provinces of the O’Brien Empire, was under the management and control of the Jacques clan.

Jenne and Keane’s father, Wade Jacques, was only a collateral descendant of the Jacques clan, not a lineal descendant. If it wasn’t because of the support of the Jacques clan, how could a coward like Wade Jacques have assumed the

position of city governor?

But now, Wade was dead.

In the eyes of the Jacques clan, the prefectural city of Cerre naturally would have to remain in the custody and management of the Jacques clan.

Although Madame Wade had married Wade Jacques, she herself did not, after all, carry any Jacques blood. It wasn't likely that the Jacques clan would allow Madame Wade to assume the position of Steward of the City of Cerre.

"Hmph, if it wasn't for those old relics in the clan..." Madame Wade was inwardly hateful.

No matter how formidable Madame Wade was, there was no way she could compete against the clan. A single word from them could turn her, a noble lady, into a beggar.

"I'm not of the age of maturity yet, but my sister is. I will send people to the provincial capital of Basil. I trust that the elders of the clan will allow my sister to be the steward of the city, rather than you!" Keane said forcefully.

There was no way that the enmity between Jenne, Keane, and Madame Wade could be resolved.

In just a few words, it had been totally exposed for everyone to see at this dinner. After all, Keane and Jenne's mother had been hounded to her death by Madame Wade. Jenne and Keane, as well, had been the victim of repeated assassination attempts at Madame Wade's orders on this trip.

"Fine. Fine. If you have the ability to do so, go ask the clan. I really want to see for myself if the clan will hand the stewardship of the prefectural city of Cerre to an eighteen-year-old girl!" Madame Wade raised her chin, speaking arrogantly.

Keane's face was filled with stubbornness as well.

A young man at fourteen years of age was at his most rebellious. The more arrogant Madame Wade was, the more Keane would retaliate against her. Keane believed that the clan would definitely stand on his side. He was, after all, a member of the clan.

After the dinner banquet.

Linley, Jenne, Lambert, and Keane were all together. After asking a few questions, Linley finally realized how enormous and powerful the Jacques clan of Jenne and Keane was.

And their father, Wade Jacques, was nothing more than a collateral descendant and not part of the ruling line.

The true ruling branch of the clan had an astonishing amount of power. The entire Northwest Administrative Province was under their control, and what's more, the control was hereditary. The Jacques clan had already managed the Northwest Administrative Province for around a thousand years.

"The imperial clan of the O'Brien Empire really is very confident, to allow a single clan to manage one of his provinces for a thousand years." Linley sighed in amazement.

The amount of territory a province controlled was greater than the amount of territory the Kingdom of Fenlai had.

To allow a clan to manage a province for so long was to allow a clan to easily accumulate an astonishing amount of power. This was a common reason for eventual rebellion and an empire breaking down.

But the imperial clan of the O'Brien Empire was extremely confident.

Because... they had the War God, as well as the large number of powerful combatants of the War God's College. Additionally, the two most important administrative provinces in the O'Brien Empire, the 'Central Administrative Province' and the 'O'Brien Administrative Province', were both under the control of the imperial clan.

"As long as the War God is present, not a single clan dares rebel. Even if the War God doesn't intervene, the disciples his War God's College had admitted over the past thousands of years now constitute an astonishingly formidable force."

Linley understood.

In the face of absolute power, those so-called armies were just a joke. Armies

were only used as a show of force for the commoners. Only Saint-level combatants could truly determine the fate of a nation.

“The Jacques clan must be extremely powerful, after having managed the Northwest Administrative Province for a thousand years,” Linley said to himself.

“Hmph, that venomous woman. I refuse to believe the clan will support her,” Keane said angrily.

Lambert only chuckled. “Young master, don’t worry. If the clan were likely to support her, she wouldn’t have acted the way she did tonight.”

Indeed.

Right now, Madame Wade was both very angry and very frustrated. “How dare those two countryside siblings be so wild and arrogant? It’s a pity that I didn’t send someone to kill them years ago. If I had, I wouldn’t have so many problems today.”

In the past, Madame Wade had believed that her own son was sure to be the next governor of the prefectural city of Cerre.

But she didn’t expect that her son would die so early.

“Holmer, that fool. three hundred years of life was wasted on an idiot.” Cold light glittered in Madame Wade’s eyes. “Over the course of three hundred years, Holmer must have accumulated quite a bit of wealth.”



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Late night. Cerre City was very peaceful.

Holmer’s residence was located in the east district of Cerre. It took up an extremely large amount of land, and had many beautiful female servants. Holmer was quite a lecherous man.

Suddenly, many hoof steps could be heard.

Two guards at the gate of Holmer’s residence looked suspiciously towards the outside. Instantly, their faces turned pale. A large number of armored city guards had clustered around the main gate.

“Open the gate,” a tall, arrogant knight clad in white metal armor and riding a fine stallion called out loudly.

Madame Wade and her two elder brothers were there as well, smiling as they watched. Holmer’s clan didn’t have any experts. With his death, his clan had become a piece of fresh meat that anyone could take.

The main gate slowly opened.

“Milords, why have you come here so late at night?” A middle-aged man ran out in a state of partial undress. He had just come running from his bed.

“Madame Countess.” He suddenly saw Madame Wade was here, and his heart instantly shook.

Madame Wade said coldly, “Based on our evidence, Holmer is under suspicion of having attempted to assassinate Keane, the successor to the governorship of Cerre. All members of Holmer’s clan are to be arrested, and all of the clan’s possessions are to be searched and seized.”

Hearing these words, the man’s legs couldn’t help but feel soft, and he fell to his knees.

“No! Madame Countess,” the middle-aged man said hurriedly. “My grandfather was invited by your two brothers...”

“You dare to slander a noble clan? Your crimes increase a level in severity. Kill him.” Madame Wade’s face turned cold.

The leading knight suddenly thrust forward with his lance, striking like a serpent from its lair. With a ‘swish’ sound, the lance pierced through the throat of that middle-aged man.

Madame Wade’s eldest brother, putting on a brave display, called out loudly, “Everyone, hurry up!”

Those city guards immediately charged into the manor like a pack of ravenous wolves and tigers. The thing that these city guards loved to do the most was search and seizures. Because when they carried these activities out, they would always be able to secretly take a few things for themselves.

But of course, they wouldn’t dare take too much, as many people were

present and watching.

“What are you doing? What are you doing?!”

A hastily dressed man and woman rushed out, shouting loudly. Some of the manor guards also hefted their weapons, but none of them dared to act.

Because... they could tell that these were the city guards.

How would the private guards of a manor dare to struggle against the city guards?

“Holmer is under suspicion of having attempted to kill young master Keane. All members of Holmer’s clan are to be arrested. Those who resist, kill them,” the knight leader said coldly. When the members of Holmer’s clan heard this order, they were all stunned.

In the face of the assault by the ferocious city guards, many people were taken without a struggle.

But there were still a number of people who were unwilling to surrender, and they turned tail to flee. The soldiers of the city guard chased after them, one by one.

“That Wade-whore,” a white-haired old man said. “She asked Grandpa to help her. Now that Grandpa is dead, she’s actually coming to ransack our manor. How venomous.”

That white-haired old man left a secret room, holding three magicrystal cards.

Holmer was three hundred years old. Of his sons, only two were still alive; the other had died of old age. The two remaining sons were the youngest ones. As for grandsons... the oldest grandchildren of his were two hundred, while the youngest were only around thirty.

“Stop!” A city guard suddenly noticed the old man.

The old man threw a handful of dust out.

“Uhhhh.” The guard’s face immediately turned blue. He grabbed at his throat, emitting several pained noises, then collapsed. He was dead.

With a sneer, the old man very agilely ran towards a small alleyway.

“Hold it!” A loud shout from far away.

The old man didn’t pay it any heed, increasing his speed instead.

“Swish.” An arrow pierced through the air at astonishing speed, howling as it pierced into the old man’s back.

The handsome, golden-haired knight lowered his bow. With a cold laugh, he said, “You thought you could run? In your dreams. Go search his body and see if he has any magicrystal cards.”

“Yes, milord.”



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Not only was the manor itself filled with people; a large ring had formed around the manor as well. Not a single member of Holmer’s clan had been able to flee. Although some members of the clan knew how to use poison, they were far inferior to Holmer.

Within the main hall of Holmer’s manor.

Madame Wade and her two brothers were staring at a pile of treasure and magicrystal cards.

“This old fart’s money-making abilities were quite impressive.” Madame Wade’s older brother’s eyes were gleaming.

Madame Wade laughed calmly. “The two of you shouldn’t lust after a small amount like this. When we take over control of the city’s governorship, our wealth will be far greater than this.”

In the air, high above Holmer’s manor.

Linley had a pair of translucent wings on his back. He was flying in the air, watching the looting and ransacking scene below in Holmer’s manor.

“Madame Wade really is vicious and ruthless. This Holmer really is quite unfortunate.” In mid-air, Linley laughed calmly as he watched all of this happen.

## The Summer Inferno

This had been a peaceful night. The miserable screams of the people of Holmer's clan being slaughtered were thus all the more jarring to the ear. Those sounds had travelled very far. Even Jenne and Keane, who were within the castle, could hear them.

"What is that?"

Keane ran out dressed in his sleepwear, while Jenne came out with her hair undone. The two siblings curiously walked out towards the direction of the castle gates. As for the extremely cautious old servant, Lambert, he had run to the castle gates already.

"By the Madame's orders, no one is permitted to leave the castle at night."

Two castle guards standing at the gate formed a cross with their spears, forbidding entry, as they spoke coldly to Lambert.

"What is going on? The two of you, move!" Keane snapped at them.

Seeing that Keane and Jenne had come, the two castle guards exchanged glances. Everyone in the castle knew that Keane was the successor to the governorship, but at the same time, Madame Wade wasn't going to easily give up her power.

"Young master Keane, Miss Jenne. We are very sorry, but the Madame has ordered that no one is to leave the castle at night. Please go back and rest," the taller of the two guards said.

Keane's face turned cold. "Out of my way."

The taller guard didn't budge. He only begged painfully, "Young master Keane, please don't make things difficult for us. If you force us to let you pass, you'll be killing us. We really can't afford to disobey the Madame's orders."

Keane was boiling with rage.



By his side, Jenne said to him, "Enough, Keane. Let's not make things difficult for them. They are in a very pitiable situation."

"Thank you, Miss Jenne! Thank you, Miss Jenne!" those two guards hurriedly said. In their hearts, they felt very grateful to Jenne. Jenne was as beautiful as a holy angel, and she possessed a kindly soul as well.

Jenne asked gently, "May I ask, what exactly happened outside? I heard screaming. It seems as though there was some sort of disaster in the east district of the city."

The taller guard said in a low voice, "Miss Jenne, not too long ago, the Madame led a group of people out of the castle, and quite a large number of city guards passed through as well."

"Aunt? City guards?" Jenne and Keane were both confused.

Why was Madame Wade leading a large group of city guards so late at night?

"Miss, young master. Let's sit down and rest for now." Lambert pointed at a nearby stone bench. Jenne and Keane nodded, then walked over, the three of them sitting down.

Jenne, Keane, and Lambert were all extremely irritated.

Madame Wade's existence was like having a fishbone stuck in their throats, causing them a great deal of misery.

"That damn woman wants to use me not being of age as an excuse to try and force me to wait two years. Hrmph. Two years. Within those two years, I probably would have been killed by her long ago," Keane cursed in a low voice.

Jenne nodded as well.

The two siblings knew very well that they couldn't allow Madame Wade to continue to act as she pleased.

"Young miss, young master. The senior madame has been in charge of Cerre City for quite a long time. The city guards as well as the castle guards all obey her orders. The senior madame's prestige is at a very high level. If young master Keane is unable to become the governor, it really will be very hard for us to fight against her. After all... there are too few people here who whole-heartedly

support us.” Lambert was very resigned.

Jenne, Keane, and Lambert were all silent.

Within Cerre, there were very few people who supported them. Perhaps even if there were people who supported them, they wouldn’t dare to do so openly. In the prefectural city of Cerre, Madame Wade was like a local tyrant.

“Whoosh.”

A wind began to blow.

“Who is it?!” The two gate guards cautiously raised their heads, and saw a man dressed in a black warrior’s outfit and wearing a black heavy sword on his back descend from the air.

“Me.” Linley looked backwards at the guards.

Instantly, the two guards no longer dared to speak. They had heard of how powerful Linley was. At these guards’ level of power, they couldn’t even dream of stopping Linley.

“Big brother Ley.” Jenne and Keane stood up.

Linley turned to look at them.

Summer was just starting, and the temperatures at night were still fairly high. Keane and Jenne were only dressed in simple sleepwear, and their hair was all mussed.

“Big brother Ley, what exactly is going on outside? Why is it so noisy?” Keane looked at Linley and asked.

Linley said casually, “Madame Wade led a group of city guards to Holmer’s clan manor and launched a search and seizure operation. Tell me, how could it not be noisy?”

“Search and seizure?” Jenne and Keane were stunned.

“Holmer’s clan?” Lambert was greatly shocked as well.

Linley casually sat down on another end of the long bench. Laughing, he said, “Just wait and rest here for a bit. Very soon, you’ll hear some good news.”

“Good news? Can it be that she intends to give us the money she’s seized

from that bastard?" Keane cursed quietly.

"BOOM!"

Right at this moment, a thunderous explosion could be heard from the east. The explosive sound was so noisy, it sounded like several dozen thunderbolts going off at once. This explosion probably woke up at least half of the residents of Cerre City.

"What was that?" Jenne, Keane, and Lambert jumped to their feet in shock.

The nearby guards, as well as the castle servants and female attendants all stared eastwards as well, and as they did, they saw that blazing flames were rising into the sky from the east.

"How could there be such a large inferno? And where did that explosion come from?" Linley looked questioningly towards the east as well.

All of the people in the castle were mystified. They all waited quietly for the city guards to return, as well as Madame Wade. Perhaps they would know what was causing that huge inferno in the east, or that massive explosion.

After a while...

A chorus of hoof steps could be heard outside the castle, followed by countless shouts. Immediately following these shouts were a series of frantic knocking sounds from the gate that came as quickly as rain drops in a storm.

"Bam!" "Bam!" "Bam!" "Bam!"

The knocking sounds were frantic and ringing.

"Open the door, quick!" Angry roars could be heard from outside the castle gates.

The two gate guards didn't dare to hesitate. They immediately opened the castle gates, as Linley, Lambert, Jenne, and Keane watched.

Once the castle doors were opened, they saw that in front of the castle were a large number of knights as well as heroic warriors. Their leader was a golden-haired man who was wielding a spear.

"Out of my way!" the golden-haired man roared to the two gate guards.

But upon seeing Keane and Jenne, the golden-haired man started, then immediately said with respect, “Deputy Commander Ritter of the city guards pays his respect to Miss Jenne and young master Keane.”

Deputy Commander Ritter could be considered the second highest ranking person in the city guard. Not too long ago, he had participated in that welcoming banquet. Naturally, he recognized Jenne and Keane.

“Mr. Ritter. What happened, to cause all of you to be so frantic?” Keane spoke.

Ritter immediately fell to one knee. He painfully said, “Young master Keane. Forgive me for being useless in my protective responsibilities. Madame Wade and her two brothers died in the explosion just now.”

“Oh... ah!?”

Keane’s eyes immediately bulged out, and Jenne and Lambert were greatly shocked as well. Disbelief painted the faces of all of the nearby guards as well.

Madame Wade had died.

Just as Keane and Jenne were worrying about her, Madame Wade and her two brothers had suddenly both died. Her death only filled the hearts of Jenne and Keane with joy.

Jenne and Keane glanced at each other, their eyes filled with wild joy.

“What exactly happened? Explain clearly.” Keane adopted the attitude and posture of a superior lecturing a subordinate.

The golden-haired Ritter immediately replied, “Your subordinate led several hundred members of the city guard, under the command of the Madame Countess, to launch a search and seizure operation of Holmer’s manor.”

“After we finished the search and seizure operation, Madame Countess ordered that all the treasures of the Holmer clan be placed within the main hall, then ordered all of us soldiers to leave, leaving behind just her and her two brothers in that hall.”

Hearing this, Keane couldn’t help but quietly curse, “That bitch really is shameless.”

Ritter continued, “We were stationed outside capturing the escaping members of the Holmer clan, but who would’ve thought that suddenly, the Holmer clan’s manor would catch fire. As soon as it did, everyone charged in to rescue the Madame Countess.

“But we hadn’t even made our way inside before we heard that terrifying explosion. Half of the building suddenly blew up and was destroyed.”

Ritter said painfully, “By the time we reached Madame Countess and the other two, we found only their bodies, which had already been blown apart by the blast. All three of them were dead.”

“Fine. Order people to bring my aunt’s corpse here, then go back and rest,” Keane directly ordered.

“Yes sir.” Ritter immediately issued the order.

Everyone all understood that with Madame Wade’s death, all of the authority in the prefectural city of Cerre now rested with this fourteen-year-old boy.

Everyone watched as Ritter’s men brought the charred, blasted remnants of the corpses inside.

Only now did Keane and Jenne totally believe... that it wasn’t just a dream. That detestable Madame Wade had truly died. From this day forward, their lives would no longer be lived in fear.

“Big brother Ley.” Jenne suddenly came to her senses. She turned to look at Linley. “Thank you.”

Lambert only now understood as well. Looking at Linley, he said with gratitude, “Mr. Ley, the good news you wanted us to hear truly was excellent news. It was the best type of news, the news that we’ve been saved.”

“What are you talking about?”

Keane was flabbergasted. “What do you mean by mumbling about good news and excellent news? OH!!!”

Finally, Keane understood as well.

“Big brother Ley, just now, you came in from outside the castle?” Keane asked quietly.

“Yep.” Linley nodded.

“Then you...” A hint of a smile was on Keane’s face.

Linley begun to chuckle as well. “Seeing how nervous and restless you all were, I helped you address the root of your troubles. Alright, time to go to bed and have a good sleep, so you’ll have the energy to take over the governance of this prefectural city.”

As he spoke, Linley turned and headed towards his own residence.

Lambert, Jenne, and Keane all were amazed. Staring at each other with shock and joy, they really wanted to scream with happiness. But of course, Madame Wade’s corpse was right next to them. It wouldn’t be appropriate for them to celebrate like that.

“Boss. It’s done?” Bebe was lying on the ground, his eyelids drooped sleepily.

Linley chuckled. “Yep. All done.”

To the current Linley, someone like Madame Wade wasn’t even qualified to be considered an ‘opponent’. Those small schemes that Madame Wade could come up with were nothing more than jokes to Linley.

Try whatever tricks you want. I’ll just straight up kill you and resolve the issue once and for all.

“Why was there an explosion?” Bebe asked curiously.

“How should I know?” Linley shook his head. “All I did was kill Madame Wade and her two brothers, then use some fire magic to set the manor on fire. Afterwards... I just rushed back alone. Who would’ve expected that as soon as I returned to the manor, there would be such an explosion?”

What Linley didn’t realize was that one of Holmer’s experimental laboratories was located in that building. Many strange and bizarre chemicals and experimental materials were stored in that room. When Linley set fire to that building, he also unknowingly set ablaze some special materials, resulting in that massive explosion.

“You don’t know?” Bebe was startled. “Oh. Then let’s go to bed.”

“Yep. Bedtime.”

Linley casually climbed into his bed, then went to sleep.

Madame Wade and her brothers had suddenly died, just like that, in one night. This news shook the prefectural city of Cerre like an earthquake. And, to Jenne and Keane, this joyous news made them so happy that they couldn't sleep at all.

But to Linley, it was nothing more than a trifling matter.

Right now, the Holmer clan's manor continued to blaze merrily into the night. Many of the local city guards were frantically trying to put out the fire...

## Gift

The prefectural city of Cerre administrated around ten or so other cities, as well as a large number of villages and farmers. The total population it controlled was in the millions. It would be fair to say that the prefectural city of Cerre could be considered as equivalent to a duchy.

And the city governor of the prefectural city of Cerre could be considered equivalent to the Grand Duke of a duchy!

“About to become the city governor of a prefectural city at just fourteen years of age. This really makes one feel envious.” In many of the hotels in Cerre, countless people were discussing this event.

Madame Wade and her brothers had suddenly died in that massive fire. This caused the somewhat complicated lines of power in Cerre to suddenly grow distinct and clear.

There was no longer any question.

Keane, who possessed the blood of the Jacques clan, would definitely assume the position of governor of the prefectural city of Cerre.

“That Madame Wade went in the middle of the night to ransack someone’s home, but she didn’t expect that she would lose her life as a result. What a farce.” a red-bearded old man laughed loudly as he grabbed a large flagon of wine.

“Heard she was burnt to death,” another nearby person said.

“How could she have been burnt to death? There were so many city guards around her. If she really was just burned by fire, the Madame Countess definitely would’ve been able to escape.” A skinny man suddenly lowered his voice. “Let me tell you a secret. Madame Countess and her brothers were first killed, and then their corpses were burnt by the fire.”



All the people nearby immediately turned to stare at him.

“This is the truth,” the skinny man said confidently.

“All of you are full of crap.” A burly man laughed coldly. “I’m an actual damn city guard, and I was there that night. Do you know more, or do I know more?”

That skinny man immediately laughed awkwardly. “Friend, I’m just kidding.”

“Madame Countess and her two brothers weren’t killed by fire. They probably died due to the blast.” The burly man said what he believed to be the truth. “Burnt to death? Wouldn’t they call for help? But the brothers in our squad didn’t hear a single cry for help the entire time. What most likely happened was that the sudden explosion instantly blew them apart, so they didn’t have any chance to cry for help.”

All the people nearby nodded, including the skinny man.

This explanation was a very logical one.

“Forget about Madame Wade. Right now, the city governors of Cerre are that pair of siblings,” the burly man took a deep drink of liquor, then spoke loudly.



\*

Indeed. Right now, the center of attention in the prefectural city of Cerre was that pair of previously unremarkable countryside-raised siblings, Jenne and Keane.

Within the castle of the prefectural city.

“Why are there so many?” Flipping through the list of gifts in front of him, Keane also looked at the gift-filled room. He couldn’t help but be stunned.

After Madame Wade’s death, all of the nobles of the city immediately wished to draw closer to Keane now. They gave him gifts, they gave him beautiful women, they gave him powerful guards... all of these nobles knew that given Keane’s young age, their clans would probably be under the direct control of Keane for the next century at least. Naturally, they had to have good relations with him.

“This isn’t that much.” Lambert shook his head.

Jenne and Keane stared at Lambert in surprise, while Linley sipped his tea at a nearby table.

“Grandpa Lambert, this isn’t a lot?” Jenne said with surprise.

Lambert shook his head. “Miss, young master. These gifts, all combined, are only worth a few hundred thousand gold coins. A few hundred thousand gold coins? Hrmph. Miss, young master, do you know how much the senior madame’s net worth was? I believe it was over ten million gold coins!”

“Over ten million gold coins?” Jenne and Keane were both stunned.

They had lived for so long in the countryside. When had they ever seen such wealth? Lambert, on the other hand, had followed their mother for many years. When he lived within the governor’s castle, he had seen many things.

“This is very normal. After managing millions of people for so many years, given the senior madame’s avaricious nature, it would be strange if she didn’t have ten million gold coins. Unfortunately, we’ve still yet to find where she hid her magicrystal card. Even if we found it... most likely, that magicrystal card was linked to the senior madame’s fingerprints. We wouldn’t be able to withdraw the money.” Lambert shook his head helplessly.

The rules that the Golden Bank of the Four Empires had set were all to the advantage of the Golden Bank of the Four Empires.

Once a magicrystal card had been imprinted with a fingerprint, only the owner of that fingerprint could access the contents. Even if others acquired the magicrystal card, it would be of no use to them.

Of course...

The owner of the magicrystal card could go to a physical branch and transfer their wealth to someone else.

But if that person were to suddenly die without initiating a transfer of funds, then the assets would be claimed in its entirety by the Golden Bank of the Four Empires. In truth, the Golden Bank of the Four Empires had no choice but to do this.

The amount of gold coins stored in magicrystal cards in the world was actually ten times greater than the amount of gold coins the Golden Bank physically possessed.

But how often would extremely wealthy people, who were in possession of at least a hundred million gold coins, actually go to the bank and physically withdraw a hundred million gold coins? Even if they managed to withdraw it, physically moving the money back would be a problem. This was one of the reasons why the Golden Bank of the Four Empires dared to issue so many magicrystal cards. At the same time, the bank didn't dare to indiscriminately issue them either, because the bank was jointly run by all four empires. And behind the empires was the War God O'Brien, as well as the longest living human expert, the High Priest. No one dared to act too rashly.

"Ten million gold coins, disappeared, just like that," Keane said painfully.

He really agonized for the loss of such a sum of money.

"Young master. Being a city governor isn't just about collecting money. You have to pay for the salaries of the city guards, to renovate the city, and so on. There are multiple expenses," Lambert added.

Keane started.

"Whaaaa? Being a city governor costs money?" Keane had no idea about this.

"That is why I said these few hundred thousand gold coins don't mean much. Fortunately, the prefectural city does have its own treasury, which should have a fair amount of money inside," Lambert said.

Keane rubbed his head. "Ah. It seems as though being city governor is quite complicated and quite burdensome."

"Sis." Keane looked hopefully at Jenne. "You have to help me out."

Jenne nodded honestly. "Keane, I'll definitely do my best to help." But this simple nod of the head was the beginning to a painful, painful life for Jenne.

Right now, neither Keane nor Jenne nor Lambert knew that while they were worrying over money, the tea-drinking Linley was in possession of an astonishing fortune that had been built up by a royal clan over thousands of

years. Most likely, even their clan, the Jacques clan which had managed the Northwest Administrative Province for a thousand years, couldn't match Linley for wealth.

After all, no matter how money-grubbing they were, they couldn't out-compete the royal clan of a kingdom.

"Jenne, Keane," Linley suddenly spoke. "You guys can stay here. I need to go train."

Jenne and Keane both looked at Linley. Keane chortled, "Big brother Ley, don't spend too much time training tonight. You have to remember to come for dinner. Tonight... my sister is going to personally cook."

Jenne immediately blushed.

Ever since the night of the banquet, when Keane had openly said that Linley was Jenne's fiancé, all of the citizens of the prefectural city of Cerre had really come to believe this was the case. Even the servants believe it. Naturally, this made Jenne quite embarrassed.

"Oh, right." Linley waved his hand with a smile.

Suddenly, in front of the courtyard, four large chests appeared out of nowhere. The chests were all open, and they were filled with all sorts of artworks, valuable magicite cores, and some rare, highly precious materials.

"What is this?" Keane and Jenne were both stunned.

"These are the possessions of Holmer's clan. I'm not too sure what the valuation of these four chests is. Most likely, over a million gold coins. Take these as well." Linley took out eight magicrystal cards. "These are the unimprinted magicrystal cards of Holmer's clan. There's eight cards in total. Each of them should have a million gold coins stored within."

Linley had overheard this information from Madame Wade's conversation with her two brothers. Only then had he learned about the value of these magicrystal cards.

"This... this..." Keane and Jenne, and even Lambert, stared at Linley in shock.

"All combined, this should be worth nearly ten million gold coins, right? With

these... you won't have to be too stingy and tight-fisted in managing the prefectural city of Cerre. Alright, time for me to go train."

Linley casually tossed the eight magiccrystal cards into the chests, then turned and left.

Jenne, Keane, and Lambert all stared at the four chests, as well as the eight runed magiccrystal cards. They didn't know what to say.

"Sis." Keane looked at Jenne.

Jenne was stunned. "Originally, when I asked big brother Ley to help us, I said I would give him ten thousand gold coins. This..."

The two siblings really had no idea as to what they should say. They had offered ten thousand gold to Linley to ask him to help them out, but he only took a single gold coin... and now, gave them this fortune worth ten million gold coins!

Ten million gold coins!

This was an extremely amazing fortune.

When the Debs clan of the Kingdom of Fenlai was at its most flourishing, its net worth was only around a hundred million gold coins. After the repercussions of the smuggling affair, their net worth dropped to around ten million gold coins, but despite that, they were still a major clan of Fenlai.

"Miss, young master, this Mr. Ley really is no ordinary person." Lambert's expression was very solemn.

Jenne and Keane both nodded.

That went without saying. How could an ordinary person so casually toss out ten million gold coins?

"Just then, when Mr. Ley waved his hands, these four chests appeared out of nowhere. If my prediction is correct... Mr. Ley is in possession of a legendary interspatial ring!" Lambert's face was extremely serious.

"An interspatial ring?" Jenne and Keane had never even heard of such a thing.

Lambert nodded. "Right. Interspatial rings are priceless treasures. In the Yulan

continent, they are a proof of one's stature and power. In the legends that I have heard, even when people offered to buy one for hundreds of millions of gold coins, no one has ever been willing to sell one."

"Hundreds of millions of gold coins?!" Jenne and Keane were wide-eyed.

What would hundreds of millions of gold coins look like if you put them all in one place? They didn't even dare imagine what an enormous fortune like that would look like.

"In the entire Northwest Administrative Province, only the legendary clan leader of the Jacques clan, the governor for the entire province, has an interspatial ring." Having been in the prefectural city of Cerre for many years, Lambert knew quite a bit about the affairs of the Jacques clan.

"Are you talking about... Great-Grandfather McKenzie?" Keane immediately said.

The two greatest source of pride for the Jacques clan was their first clan leader, Jacques, and their legendary clan leader, McKenzie Jacques.

In the past Jacques had been an ordinary commoner. He ended up joining the army, and was continuously promoted through the ranks, and also made major contributions to the O'Brien Empire. In the end, he even founded a new legion for the O'Brien Empire; the Jacques Legion.

As Jacques grew famous, he founded his own Jacques clan.

The Emperor even gave the Northwest Administrative Province to Jacques for his clan to manage. From this, one could tell how greatly Jacques was favored by the imperial clan.

But of course... the first clan leader was famous because of his military abilities in leading armies. With regards to how personally powerful he was, up till his dying day, he still was still just a warrior of the eighth rank.

But McKenzie Jacques was the pride of the clan. Over fifty years ago, McKenzie had entered the Saint level before the age of two hundred.

A Saint-level combatant!

Once a clan produced a Saint-level combatant, so long as that combatant

didn't perish and the clan didn't rebel, the clan's glory would never diminish.

"Great-Grandfather McKenzie, has an interspatial ring?" Keane was surprised.

"Right. And he has one only because in the past, his Imperial Majesty, the Emperor himself, personally gifted it to him," Lambert said emotionally. "The Jacques clan has always been proud of this fact. You must understand, even many of the kings of various kingdoms in the Yulan continent do not possess an interspatial ring."

Only now did Jenne and Keane completely understand how rare and valuable these interspatial rings were.

"But I didn't expect... that Mr. Ley would also be in possession of an interspatial ring. No wonder... no wonder ten million gold coins was nothing to him."

Jenne and Keane felt as though they couldn't breathe.

"I thought I had a very high rank as the successor to the city governorship. I thought I could give big brother Ley a really, really important official position to serve in. But it seems as though... big brother Ley..." Keane was now beginning to understand.

The governor of a prefectural city, to the ordinary people, was someone as high above them as the heavens were.

But to experts such as Linley, it was nothing at all. He could kill one whenever he wanted to.

## The Vast Earth

A month later, the order came down from the clan leader of the Jacques clan; Keane was to assume the position of city governor of the prefectural city of Cerre. However, prior to achieving the age of maturity, his sister, Jenne, was to assist him in managing the affairs of the city.

“Big brother Ley, you are leaving?”

Jenne, Keane, and Lambert all looked at Linley with astonishment.

With Keane the governor of Cerre and Jenne his steward, the two of them now had comparatively relaxed lives. Just as the two of them wanted to find a way to repay Linley, he suddenly declared his intention to depart from the prefectural city of Cerre.

“Big brother Ley.” Jenne’s eyes were starting to turn slightly red.

Linley was carrying his heavy sword, and Bebe was on his shoulders. By his side was Haeru, his Blackcloud Panther. Smiling, Linley said, “In this developed, urbanized environment within Cerre City, my training is negatively influenced. I won’t be going too far. I just intend to go to a valley in the mountains near Cerre City to quietly train for a time.”

To Linley, the most important thing was still training. Linley, who was still constantly improving himself, hadn’t yet reached a bottleneck, which made training all the more important. At a time like this, he had to seize the opportunity to raise his power as much as possible.

There were records of Dragonblood Warriors of the Baruch clan reaching the Saint level and dominating the world in a matter of decades due to intensive training.

Experts had to be able to endure loneliness.

“Valley?” Jenne and Keane both inwardly let out sighs of relief.



“Alright, if I have some free time, I’ll come visit. I’ve already helped you as much as I can. In the future, you’ll have to rely on yourselves,” Linley said with a laugh.

When he looked at these two siblings, Keane and Jenne, Linley would often think of his own younger brother, Wharton. Right now, he and Wharton also had lost their parents.

“I wonder how Wharton is doing. After I finish understanding the level beyond ‘impose’, I’ll go pay him a visit.”

Linley knew very well that there was no need for him to disturb Wharton over the course of Wharton’s training in the O’Brien Empire. In addition, only by learning on his own would Wharton grow fastest.

Once Linley was by Wharton’s side, in all likelihood, Wharton would be inadvertently influenced in a negative way.



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East of Cerre City, there was a vibrant, green mountain range with an unassuming little valley. Linley erected a wooden room here, then began to engage in quiet training.

Late at night, within the mountain valley. There was a green plain of grass, and even a little lake in the middle of it.

Linley was seated in a meditative trance close to the lake. His eyes were closed as he attuned himself to nature. By his side, there was a lit campfire, casting a flickering light across Linley’s face.

Linley could feel the expansiveness of the vast earth, the flows of the wind, and the streams of water. He could feel the passion of the flames...

As a magus, especially one with exceptional affinity for both wind and earth elemental essence, Linley’s ability to attune with nature was far superior to most warriors.

This was the reason why that ancestor of the Baruch clan who used a heavy

warhammer as his weapon only managed to reach the level of 'impose' after entering the Saint level. After all, it was harder for warriors to become one with nature, compared to magi.

"The 'Thunderbolt' technique learned when I reached the level of 'wielding something heavy as though it were light' contained explosive force, like the eruption of a volcano. As for the so-called 'impose', it contains the 'imposing force' of nature itself, of earth, fire, water, and wind. However..."

After meditating for a long time, Linley suddenly understood.

"The 'impose' level is merely an 'imposing force' that borrows from the strength of the surrounding nature. The level that is above 'impose' should be all-embracing. I need to pursue the most suitable avenue for this."

In the darkness of the night, Linley remained there in the meditative pose. His eyes then suddenly opened, and they were as resplendent as the stars in the night sky.

"Different weapons will need to be used in different ways. The strength of the heavy sword lies in its weight! As for this heavy sword, Bladeless, it naturally doesn't rely on a sharp edge. It openly relies on its tremendous weight and makes open, direct assaults."

Linley's spirit was dimly sensing something.

The principles of training with the heavy sword were very similar to the fundamental principles of the earth itself.

"The vast earth is dense and heavy. The vast earth is boundless. The vast earth is stable..." Linley was holding the adamantine heavy sword in his hands, but his heart had totally merged with the throbbing pulse of the earth.

The unique vibrating pulse of the earth had a one-of-a-kind, heart-shaking rhythm. Generally speaking, only people who had reached a very high level of attunement to the earth would sense it.

Linley rose to his feet.

He began to silently wield the adamantine heavy sword about. As the adamantine heavy sword danced about, Linley's own movements and the

movements of his sword began to enter into a certain unique rhythm.

This was a rhythm that was like the pulse of one's heart.

"Whoosh."

The adamantine heavy sword seemed to carry a million pounds of force, as it heavily slashed through the air again and again. As Linley swung his heavy sword repeatedly, he felt as though he had totally become one with the earth. Just by training with his heavy sword, he felt as though he himself now carried the weight of the earth.

"Boom."

Linley's heavy adamantine sword suddenly pierced directly up into the air. Several explosive booms could be heard in succession. This empty stab upwards had caused the air itself to explode. This was inconceivable! This was because no matter how fast a weapon could move, it could at most cause a single sonic boom. To cause multiple sonic booms was virtually impossible.

"Hrm?" Linley's eyes suddenly lit up.

But just like that, upon becoming distracted, Linley was no longer absorbed with that near-miraculous feeling of being one with nature.

"What happened just then? I didn't use any battle-qi, but my power split into multiple rhythmic pulses in that attack."

Linley began to ponder this question.

When in the middle of training, people would sometimes enter into a certain state and reach an astonishing level of power. But if they weren't able to totally understand the state they had entered, they wouldn't be able to wield its power again so easily.

What Linley needed to do now was to constantly ponder and constantly train.

He needed to master everything and be in complete control!



The sky was ocean-blue, a pure azure color without a hint of other colors. A few beautiful, lazy clouds drifted across it. Linley's life in the valley was indeed very quiet.

The blowing wind. The rippling lake.

Right now, Linley wasn't training. He was fishing in the valley lake. A person couldn't always be training; if they did, it could actually be counter-productive.

If he wanted to go fishing, he would. If he wanted to go to sleep, he would.

His heart had become one with the world, one with nature.

When he did train, this made his rate of improvement extremely high.

"Big brother Ley." From outside the valley, a happy voice could be heard. Linley turned and saw Jenne on a fine stallion. Behind her, there were two pretty female servants on horses. These two female servants were clearly quite talented, as their movements on their horses were those of practiced riders.

"Jenne." Linley put down his fishing pole and stood up.

Neither Bebe nor Haeru were currently present. The two of them would often go deeper into the mountains to hunt for wild beasts to eat. The beasts in this mountain range Linley had chosen to stay in were all ordinary animals. Magical beasts were extremely rare.

"Big brother Ley, these are some of the dishes that I prepared." Jenne removed a package from the back of her horse. The package was well wrapped. "You definitely can't have been eating too well here. Come, big brother Ley, have a good taste."

Jenne unwrapped the package, one layer at a time. Inside was a metal box, which was filled with all sorts of dishes as well as rice.

Linley took a sniff.

"Mmm. It really does smell good." Linley laughed.

Jenne's face immediately turned red with excitement.

But in his heart, Linley was sighing. How could Linley not tell how Jenne felt? In terms of both appearance as well as temperament, Jenne was all but perfect.

But having experienced so much, it was hard for Linley to open the depths of his heart and let anyone else in.

“Love?”

Linley sighed to himself.

He didn't have any interest in affairs of the heart. The most important thing for now was to focus on his training. Right at this moment, a scene couldn't help but suddenly flash through Linley's mind.

After Linley's father had died, all the nobles had come to pay their respects at the town of Wushan. That night, Delia had come to visit him. She had wanted to tell Linley that she was returning to the Yulan Empire. And that night, before she had left... Delia had kissed him.

“Delia?”

Aside from Alice, perhaps the only person Linley felt some romantic affection towards was this girl whom he had known since his very first year at the Ernst Institute, especially after the open displays of affection Delia had shown him. Although Linley had never admitted it openly, in his heart, Delia's image had been engraved in his mind.

“Big brother Ley, eat up!” Jenne said hopefully.

Linley sighed to himself. “I can't let Jenne waste her youth like this.” As he thought to himself, Linley began to eat heartily while praising, “This really is excellent. The taste is wonderful.”

Hearing Linley's praise, Jenne was all smiles.

“Jenne, in the future, though, you don't need to come visit me. When I am training, I don't like to be disturbed,” Linley said to Jenne.

Jenne was startled.

“Oh,” Jenne mumbled, then she squeezed out a smile. “Then when you have some free time, big brother Ley, come visit us at the castle.”

“Sure.” Linley could only respond affirmatively.



\*

The days of Linley training in the mountain valley passed by very quickly. In the blink of an eye, over a month had passed. With regards to how to properly use his adamantine heavy sword, Linley had gradually begun to find the proper path.

So long as he persevered down this path, in a few years' time, he definitely would be able to reach a new level that was beyond the 'impose' level!



\*

Within a secluded hotel in the prefectural city of Cerre.

This hotel was very dimly lit, and the atmosphere tended towards the dark, giving the impression of dusk. Each table was arranged in a very orderly manner, and between each booth, there was a screen.

This was a very quiet hotel with a great deal of atmosphere. The first time Linley had come here, he had taken a liking to it.

The expenses here were fairly high as well.

While he was training, generally speaking, every seven or eight days, Linley would come here and drink wine while listening to the elegant, beautiful music of the hotel. Every so often, he would hear some gossip from travelers.

"It's almost July. Wharton's school year should be starting soon," Linley thought to himself.

Right now, there were quite a few customers in this hotel. All of the customers engaged in conversations were quite conscientiously lowering their voices as they spoke, but when Linley focused, he could clearly hear every word of every conversation they were having.

Suddenly, a quiet conversation attracted Linley's attention.

"Have you heard? In the imperial capital, an incredible genius has emerged. A seventeen-year-old named 'Wharton'." On a table next to Linley, there were three middle-aged men. They were discussing the various geniuses of the

empire.

Wharton?

Linley focused his attention on them.

After having spent so much time in the O'Brien Empire, Linley had yet to learn anything regarding Wharton.

"Are you talking about that genius who popped up out of nowhere in the O'Brien Academy?" The bald man's eyes lit up. "I've heard of him too. The end-of-the-year competitions for students of the seventh grade always receive a great deal of attention. Even some students who have reached the eighth rank will participate on occasion."

As the number one warrior academy of the Yulan continent, the O'Brien Academy was divided into seven grades.

Upon reaching the seventh rank, a warrior was admitted into the seventh grade.

A warrior of the seventh rank was qualified to graduate, but many of them still elected to stay in the academy. Even some warriors of the eighth rank were in no hurry to graduate.

"Old bald vulture, you've heard this news as well? That Wharton is really... wow." A jade-haired middle-aged man sighed. "Only seventeen years old. In the past, he had never participated in any of the yearly competitions. This time, when he took part in the seventh-grade competition, he actually defeated a warrior of the eighth rank to become the champion of the seventh grade class."

"What? A seventeen-year-old who defeated a warrior of the eighth rank? Are you serious? Is this real?" a pudgy man who had only been listening up till now suddenly said in shock.

The bald man glanced at him. "Of course it's real. I personally witnessed it. You have no idea. This Wharton was around two meters tall and extremely powerfully built. His physical presence alone exerts tremendous pressure on people. His weapon of choice is an extremely terrifying giant warblade. Wielding that warblade, that Wharton was actually able to defeat a warrior of the eighth rank to become the champion of the seventh-grade class."

“From what I heard, for this Wharton to already be able to defeat a warrior of the eighth rank now means that he most likely will be able to reach the eighth rank himself by age twenty. In the past, the Prodigy Sword Saint, Olivier, reached the ninth rank when he was thirty. This Wharton’s natural ability isn’t too far off.” The jade-haired man praised as well, “For a seventeen-year-old to be able to defeat a warrior of the eighth rank is amazing. It has been a long time since the empire has produced a genius like this. He’s even been publicly acknowledged as the number one genius of the O’Brien Academy, and the Emperor has already conferred upon him the title of Count.”



## The Cardinal

The fat man said questioningly, “Hey, according to what you two are saying, someone like this Wharton should’ve become famous a long time ago. Why hadn’t anyone heard of him until now?”

The bald man nodded. “I was suspicious about this question as well, so I did some investigating. This Wharton, in all his time at the O’Brien Empire, had never participated in the yearly tournaments, nor did he ever duel against any experts. That’s why he didn’t have any fame at all.”

“To have power but not reveal it.” The jade-haired man and the fat man both sighed in appreciation.

“Forget about the past.” The bald man was very confident. “After this seventh-grade tournament at the O’Brien Academy, this Wharton is going to be the center of attention.”

Within that secluded little hotel, Linley continued to sip his wine. There was a hint of a smile on his face.

“Little Wharton is two meters tall? That’s a bit taller than me.”

When Wharton left the town of Wushan, he had only been six years old. At the time, he still had his baby teeth, and was very adorable. In the blink of an eye, eleven years had passed.

“Little Wharton!”

A warm feeling swelled in Linley’s heart. This was the affection and bond between siblings.

“Little Wharton’s density of dragonblood in his veins is even higher than mine. His natural talent as a warrior is higher than me as well. He defeated warriors of the eighth rank at age seventeen? Mm... I expect Wharton should have reached the seventh rank at least two or three years ago.”

Linley's guesses were absolutely correct.

That year, the six-year-old Wharton had followed Housekeeper Hiri on the long, winding road to the O'Brien Empire. Given Wharton's natural ability, it was easy for him to enter the O'Brien Academy.

But Housekeeper Hiri understood that the Baruch clan still belonged to the Holy Union. Thus, all this time, he had made sure that Wharton would conceal his true strength and not reveal it. If Wharton shone too brightly, after graduation, the O'Brien Academy wouldn't easily allow him to return to the Holy Union.

Thus, per Housekeeper Hiri's guidance, this entire time Wharton had been concealing his strength. Although he had revealed a little when he was a child, at that time he was too young and thus no one paid attention. Once he grew up and matured, he naturally understood the importance of concealing himself.

Long years of hard training.

At the O'Brien Academy, the top warrior academy of the most military powerful empire in the world, Wharton's rate of improvement had been quite rapid.

When Wharton turned fourteen, Hillman, per Linley's instructions, had arrived at the O'Brien Academy.

Actually, by the time Hillman had arrived at the O'Brien Academy, the 'Apocalypse Day' had already happened long ago. The imperial clan and major noble clans of the O'Brien Empire all had their own unique communications systems and had known about it long ago. As the elite military academy of the O'Brien Empire, the O'Brien Academy naturally knew about this news as well.

When Hillman reached the empire, Wharton already knew that Apocalypse Day had occurred.

Hillman informed Wharton of the death of Hogg, as well as Linley's decision to seek revenge. Wharton was totally stunned. He had no idea what he should do.

With Hillman and Hiri at his side, and with the warblade 'Slaughterer' in his hands per Linley's bequeathing, Wharton made up his mind to assume the responsibilities of the clan. But in his heart, Wharton remained concerned for

his big brother, Linley. Wharton didn't know what the situation was with Linley.

The distance from the Holy Union to the O'Brien Empire was simply too great. A one-way journey would take at least a year.

Fortunately, the Dawson Conglomerate had gotten in contact with Wharton and sent him a secret letter.

That secret letter was written by Yale. It clearly described the enmity between Linley and Clayde, as well as the Radiant Church. It also informed Wharton that Linley was fine, but that he would embark on a long period of solo training.

After hearing this news, Wharton felt a bit more at ease.

Wharton felt all the more proud of his big brother, and that made him all the more determined to work hard, so that in the future, he would stand side-by-side with him. In the past, Wharton was already very hard working, but the three years after that, Wharton trained even harder. When he was fifteen years old, Wharton had reached the seventh rank as a warrior.

When he turned seventeen, Wharton believed that he had reached a certain level of attainment in the use of the warblade 'Slaughterer'. At that time, he made up his mind to participate in the yearly tournament. As a result of that participation, Wharton shocked the empire and became the most dazzling new star in the imperial capital. The Emperor himself had bestowed the title of Count upon him.



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Seated in the corner of the hotel, Linley was happier than he had been in a long time.

"Boss, Wharton? That's your little brother, right?" Bebe was curled up on a chair, staring at Linley with his beady little black eyes.

Laughing, Linley nodded.

"That little tyke can beat a warrior of the eighth rank?" Bebe sighed in surprise. "Boss, your little brother should be able to transform into a

Dragonblood Warrior, right?”

“Naturally.”

Linley was very proud of his younger brother Wharton. “Bebe, I transformed into a Dragonblood Warrior through drinking the dragon’s blood of the Armored Razorback Wyrms and agitating the dragonblood in my veins. My younger brother has a higher density of dragonblood in his veins. He can directly become a Dragonblood Warrior. But his Dragonform isn’t the same as mine.”

Linley clearly remembered how the Dragonform transformation was described in his clan’s records.

Once the density of dragonblood in one’s veins was high enough, after one trained according to the Secret Dragonblood Manual, one could transform into a Dragonblood Warrior. Normally, a Dragonblood Warrior’s body would be covered with azure draconic scales, have an azure draconic tail, and a single draconic horn sprouting from the forehead.

Linley’s transformation, however, was a Dragonform covered with black scales and with black spikes piercing from his forehead, spine, elbows, and knees, as well as a black tail.

“A bottle of Green Jadeite for each person!” A voice which Linley was familiar with rang out in the hotel.

“This is...”

Linley seemed to have been struck by lightning. His entire body turned stiff, and then he immediately said mentally to Bebe, “Bebe, come to me. Don’t reveal yourself.” Linley placed Bebe onto a chair in the corner of his little booth.

This hotel was very dimly lit.

What’s more, every table was separated by a wooden screen. Linley’s body was almost entirely blocked by that wooden screen, and so that familiar person didn’t see Linley at all.

Linley turned his head to peek out just slightly...

That pudgy figure. Those eyes which turned into slits when beaming.

“It’s him.”

Linley immediately pulled his head back. “Cardinal Lampson. Why is he here in the O’Brien Empire? And those people by his side aren’t weak either. What’s more, one of them is one of the Ascetics who appeared at the highest level of the Radiant Temple that year.”

Indeed, that Ascetic was one of the men who had worked with Heidens in setting up that magical formation. He was a powerful combatant.

There were at least two combatants of the ninth rank here; Lampson and the Ascetic.

“I don’t recognize the others, but judging from their auras, they aren’t much weaker than Lampson. Perhaps they are also experts of the ninth rank.”

Linley’s heart began to tremble.

“In a place such as the prefectural city of Cerre, why are so many experts of the Radiant Church present? Could it be... could it be that...” Linley’s heart clenched. “Could it be that my identity has been revealed?”

Linley knew that an enormous organization such as the Holy Union definitely had intelligence networks in the various other kingdoms and empires. But could their intelligence network really have deeply penetrated even a place such as the prefectural city of Cerre?

“Boss, what’s going on?” Bebe was still confused. Having been ordered by Linley into a corner, he had no idea what was going on.

Linley looked at Bebe, a hint of a smile on his lips. “Bebe, experts from the Radiant Church have arrived. There should be several combatants of the ninth rank.”

“The Radiant Church?” A murderous look flashed in Bebe’s eyes.

“If they plan to act against me, I’ll make sure none of them leave Cerre alive.” Linley’s heart was filled with a killing intent as well. Linley’s current level of power was far greater than what it had been in the past.

When Dragonformed, his power was that of a warrior of the peak-stage ninth rank. And what’s more, with regards to the usage of his adamantine heavy

sword, Linley had also reached the peak of the 'impose' level, and had just dimly begun to sense his way to an even higher level of attainment.

Linley listened carefully.

Those people from the Radiant Church hadn't discovered Linley's presence yet.

"For this fellow's sake, we've spent two years. Finally, in another ten days or half month or so, we'll be able to go back." Lampson's voice was very soft.

Lampson was very careful when he spoke as well, not giving any hint as to the identity of 'this fellow'.

"Two years." Another black-robed man whose back was facing Linley shook his head. "For the sake of dealing with that old fellow, several of my good friends have died."

"As long as we capture him, it will all have been worth it," Lampson said.



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Linley frowned as he listened to their conversation.

"What do they mean?"

He had indeed killed six Special Executors of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal, but he definitely wasn't an 'old fellow'.

"Old fellow? And they are going back soon?" Linley was beginning to understand that these people were here, most likely for the purpose of dealing with that person.

Linley began to grow curious. Who, exactly, was worth the Radiant Church expending this much effort on?

"Old fellow, what are you staring at?" one of the black-robed men snapped quietly.

"Why the arrogance?" an ancient-sounding voice spoke out. "If it weren't for the fact that you outnumbered me and used some tricks, how could I have

fallen into your hands? What a joke.”

Linley’s eyelids twitched.

It seemed that the owner of this old voice was the person whom the Radiant Church desired to acquire.

“The Radiant Church didn’t send such a large number of experts to other countries to pursue and kill me. But they did for this old man... who exactly is he?”

Linley wondered to himself.

“No matter what, and no matter who this old man is, I’ll definitely rescue him.” Linley laughed coldly to himself. “Being able to disrupt the important plans of the Radiant Church will make myself feel a bit better.”

To totally destroy the Radiant Church and uproot it entirely was very hard.

Right now, he could only proceed one step at a time.

After waiting about half an hour, Lampson and his group of men finally left the hotel, taking the old man with them. From start to finish, Lampson and the people with him hadn’t cast a single glance towards Linley, who had been hidden by his screen.

Linley walked out from his booth.

“Bebe, let’s go.” Linley casually tossed down a few gold pieces, immediately leading Bebe out of the hotel, following Lampson’s group from behind.

Linley’s understanding of the ‘impose’ level had already reached the peak of mastery. Just by using his knowledge of ‘impose’, Linley was able to stand on top of water without sinking down, something which most combatants of the ninth rank could not do. This was a higher level of understanding, which couldn’t be accomplished simply through powerful physical strength or battle-qi.

Following behind Lampson’s group, Linley finally managed to see who these people were.

“The Radiant Church has six people, along with that mysterious old man they have under guard.” Linley had the sense that these six were all combatants of

the ninth rank.

Six experts of the ninth rank, guarding and escorting a single old man. And with Cardinal Lampson personally leading the squad.

Hearing their conversation, it seemed that Cardinal Lampson's squad had spent two years on this assignment, and had lost quite a few people as well.

"Just who is this old man?" From behind, Linley managed to catch a glimpse of how the old man looked as well.

He was extremely skinny, and his white eyebrows were so long that they drooped down to his chest. Most importantly, this old man was shackled by the hands. Only, there was a piece of cloth wrapped around the manacles. Most people simply wouldn't notice it unless they had carefully inspected it. Even Linley had only noticed it after tailing them for a long time, and only because a gust of wind had temporarily blown the cloth wrapping aside for a moment.

"Hrm? Is that..." This was the first time Linley had seen this legendary tool. "Antimagic manacles?"

According to the records, anyone shackled by these antimagic manacles wouldn't be able to use any of the mageforce in their body. Even the most powerful of magi would be like an ordinary person. But these antimagic shackles were extremely expensive. This was the first time Linley had seen such a thing.

Linley slipped in and out of the crowds on the street, sometimes dodging, sometimes hiding. His movements were very graceful. Lampson and his men had no idea he was there at all.

After a while, Lampson and his men arrived at an alleyway. They stopped in front of a two-story residence. One of the black-robed men knocked on the door.

"Milord." The door to the residence opened, and a middle-aged man came out with a bow. "Everything is prepared. Milords, please come in and rest."

Lampson and the others nodded.

"Xartes, you and your brother, stand guard on the old man. We will come



relieve you later,” Lampson instructed.

Linley was secretly startled. “Even shackled by antimagic manacles, they still intend to watch him this closely? This old man really is something special.” This made Linley desire to ruin the Radiant Church’s plans even more.

## Zassler

The sky slowly grew dark. Linley remained hidden outside the walls of this residence the entire time, but up till now, he still hadn't found any opportunity or method by which he could stealthily get near that mysterious old man.

"Based on their conversation in the hotel, the Radiant Church seems to have sacrificed several powerful experts for the sake of catching this person." Linley frowned as he considered the question. "This old man is at least of the ninth rank in power."

"But he shouldn't be at the Saint level yet. Even a large group of powerful experts of the ninth rank could at most force the Saint-level to flee. It definitely is highly unlikely that they would seize him."

Although Linley wasn't too sure about exactly how powerful that mysterious old man was, without question, that mysterious old man had the ability to deal with multiple experts of the ninth rank.

"This old man must be very important for the Radiant Church to expend so much effort on catching him. I'll definitely disrupt their scheme." Linley's eyes were radiating a cold light. "But killing these six experts of the ninth rank and preventing a single one of them from escaping Cerre is a difficult task."

Linley himself was living quite close to Cerre. Naturally, he wouldn't want his movements and his presence to be exposed.

If he was to act, he would have to kill all six of them.

"Myself, Bebe, Haeru. We are totally capable of dealing with three combatants of the ninth rank. Against six... if we use some tactics, it still isn't out of the realm of possibility. However, it's best if we release the old man first and have him ally with us. That will give us an even greater chance of success."

Linley knew how to deal with antimagic manacles.

The power and value of antimagic manacles lay in the complicated magical rune formations etched onto them. But the materials the manacles were made of actually weren't that durable. Although antimagic manacles prevented the prisoner from using any mageforce and was fairly sturdy, Linley was completely confident in his ability to break them.

Linley wasn't in a rush. At this time, he mentally commanded Haeru to return to the city from within the mountain valley.

Humans and the magical beast companions they had tamed were spiritually bound. The more powerful the spiritual energy of the two was, the greater the distance the two could exchange mental conversations.

For example, Linley and Bebe could exchange thoughts from a distance of several hundred kilometers. But if they were to become separated from an even farther distance, it would no longer be possible.

As for some weak members of noble clans who used soul-binding scrolls to tame magical beasts of the first, second, or third ranks, they might not be able to communicate past a distance of just a few hundred meters.

The main issue was spiritual energy.

Linley and Haeru, as well, could spiritually communicate from a distance of hundreds of kilometers. But once the distance grew too great, they would only be able to vaguely sense the direction each was in, and could no longer send messages.

Darkness descended. It was approximately nine o'clock at night now.

Dressed in a black warrior's outfit, Linley was hiding outside the walls of the residence, alongside the similarly black Shadowmouse, Bebe, as well as the Blackcloud Panther, Haeru. They were quietly waiting for their opportunity.

"Bebe, Haeru, the two of you stay here. Only make your move after I mentally command you two to act," Linley instructed.

Haeru and Bebe both nodded.

Linley immediately removed his black warrior's outfit, then allowed black scales to manifest on top of his skin. A black spike jutted forth from his

forehead, and spikes jutted out along his entire back spine.

That draconic tail silently pierced through Linley's long pants.

Linley's eyes became a cold, merciless dark gold color.

"Remember. Await my order," Linley once again instructed Bebe and Haeru. And then, like a phantom in the darkness, Linley glided towards the courtyard.

After having mastered the 'impose' level, Linley could now move without causing any disturbance to the surrounding air.

The main building had two floors and on the first floor, there were three rooms. The central room clearly was the place where the old man had been locked into because outside this room, there were two black-robed men.

Linley crept behind a manmade hill, not moving at all as he quietly awaited his opportunity.

"I refuse to believe you won't lose your focus for even a second." Linley was extremely patient.

Right now, the two black-robed men were engaging in conversation out of boredom.

"Bro, after completing this mission, the two of us have to have a good, long rest. These past two years have exhausted us. I've been nervous this entire time, not daring to loosen up at all," one of the black-haired men said.

"Right. On this mission, two of our Ascetics of the ninth rank died, and three Special Executors of the ninth rank as well. Eleven of us had to work together, aided by poison, and yet five of us still died. This old fellow is such a monster."

Right now, the two black-robed men were fairly relaxed.

In order to pursue and capture this old fellow, their group had been sent out as soon as the Radiant Church had received news of his whereabouts. They had passed through the O'Brien Empire, traversed the 48 Anarchic Duchies, and entered the great plains of the far east. They had battled against this mysterious old man for months, finally capturing him in one of the duchies of the Anarchic Lands.

But as long as they had managed to seize this old man, all their sacrifices

would have been worth it.

They were very careful on their way back as well. They were afraid that the experts of the O'Brien Empire would discover them. But by now, they were halfway back, and the towns they would pass by in the future were all small ones without many experts. They shouldn't pose much danger.

Naturally, Lampson and the others now felt slightly more relaxed.

"Bro, I'm going to the bathroom. You stand guard here. I'll be back in a minute," one of the black-robed men said.

The other black-robed man laughed. "I was fine before you said anything, but now that you mentioned going to the bathroom, I want to go as well. Fine, you go first, and I'll go later." Although they were a bit relaxed, they still didn't dare to have both guards be gone at the same time.

After all, if they let this old man escape, they would have committed a grave sin.

Hiding behind the manmade hill, when Linley saw the black-robed man leave, he felt a hint of surprised excitement. "Only one left. Killing him isn't a problem at all. Only... I can't let him make any noise."

Linley narrowed his eyes, while beginning to quietly mouth the words to a magical spell. 'Supersonic'.



\*

At this moment, Xartes was currently standing at his bedroom door, keeping a casual eye on his surroundings. In a mere prefectural city, Xartes, an expert of the ninth rank, still felt quite self-confident.

But suddenly, Xartes saw a black light flash in the corner of his eyes.

"What was that?" Xartes turned his head over to look.

An enormous bluish-black sword had suddenly appeared in his field of vision. The most terrifying thing was, this bluish-black sword seemed to be using all of the surrounding area to apply pressure and force on him, locking him into

place!

Space itself had been totally locked!

Xartes wanted to cry out in alarm, but he couldn't make a sound. In truth, even if he had managed to shout, the sound wouldn't have managed to leak through that frozen space.

Xartes' eyes were round and bulging. Suddenly, he slammed his palm, now glowing with radiant battle-qi, in the direction of the sword.

"Bam!"

When the enormous sword struck Xartes' hand, Xartes felt as though he had suddenly slammed against a boundless, roiling flood. He wasn't able to suppress it at all.

"Boom." His hand and his arm disintegrated and liquefied, the bones in them shattering.

And then, not slowing down, the adamantine heavy sword struck Xartes on his chest. Xartes only felt his chest tremble, felt something break, and then... he felt nothing else.

In the blink of an eye. the opponent was killed.

He didn't have a chance. After Dragonforming, Linley was a peak-stage combatant of the ninth rank, and had the adamantine heavy sword for his weapon. At the same time, he had reached the realm of understanding and mastering the power of 'impose'. The two were on totally different levels.

"Hurry." Linley gently pushed the door open. As he did, he immediately saw that skinny old man with long white hair and the long white eyebrows, seated cross-legged on the floor. Hearing Linley enter, the old man casually opened his eyes while saying, "Why have you come..."

But upon seeing Linley, the old man's words immediately came to a halt.

Seeing Linley in full Dragonform, the old man stared at Linley. Lowering his voice, he said, "What plane of existence do you come from, Draconian?"

"Draconian?" Linley was startled.

Could it be that in other planes, there was a race called Draconians that looked similar to him?

“Why have you come here?” the old man said again in that quiet voice.

“To save you.”

Linley was wielding his adamantine heavy sword. “Hold your arms out straight. I will break your antimagic manacles.”

Although the old man was suspicious as to who Linley was, he still very obediently held his arms out. Staring at the pitch-black antimagic manacles, Linley chopped directly down with his adamantine heavy sword.

‘Wielding Something Heavy as Though it Were Light’ – Thunderbolt!

The adamantine heavy sword drifted down, as slowly and gracefully as a leaf, barely brushing against the center of the antimagic manacles. As it did, with a ‘crack’ sound, multiple cracks appeared in the antimagic manacles, and pieces of it even went flying to the edges of the room.

The old man only had to casually shake his hands, and the two halves of the already-destroyed manacles went flying in opposite directions.

“I didn’t ask you to save me, so I owe you nothing.” The emaciated, pale-faced old man stood there, staring at Linley coldly.

Linley glanced at him, but Linley’s dark gold pupils seemed to stir no fear in this old man at all.

“Do you have enmity with the Radiant Church?” Linley said quietly.

Both of them were speaking extremely quietly, and Lampson’s group in the two-story building couldn’t hear their conversation at all.

“Enmity? I won’t stop until one of us is destroyed,” the old man said boldly.

“That’s all I need,” Linley said calmly. “Although I don’t know who you are, I must tell you... tonight, none of the Radiant Church’s men can be allowed to leave here alive. I don’t want to reveal myself to them.”

“Reveal yourself?” The old man was curious. “Which plane of existence do you come from, Draconian? Could it be that you are a Draconian from one of

the Four Higher Planes? The Infernal Realm?”

Linley glanced at him. “No.”

The old man began to laugh evilly. “Then let me tell you who I am, first. My name is Zassler. I am an Arch Magus, a necromancer of the ninth rank. Yourself?”

Linley was truly shocked.

As a magus, Linley knew very well that there were three types of magic that surpassed earth, fire, wind, water, lightning, light, and darkness magic. Doehring Cowart had discussed this with him before as well.

These three forms of magic were the Oracular Magic which the Radiant Church was adept at, the Life Magic which was used by the legendary High Priest of the Yulan Empire, and the extremely rare Necromantic Magic.

All three of these types of magic were extremely rare in the Yulan continent.

When Linley realized that Holmer was ambushing him, because Holmer had used poison gas, Linley had asked him if he was a necromancer. If he had been... Linley probably wouldn't have been able to bear killing him.

After all!

The Four Higher Planes had been created by the Four Overgods. These Overgods were, respectively, the Overgod of Fate, the Overgod of Life, the Overgod of Death, and the Overgod of Destruction.

The Overgod of Fate had passed down Oracular Magic.

The Overgod of Life had passed down Life Magic.

The Overgod of Death had passed down Necromantic Magic.

These three branches of magic were astonishingly powerful, precisely because they originally stemmed from the Four Overgods. As for the Overgod of Destruction, he hadn't passed down any magic at all. The followers of the Overgod of Destruction held their own power and abilities in prime reverence.

For example, the War God O'Brien was a follower of the Overgod of Destruction.



“An Arch Magus necromancer?” Shock appeared on Linley’s face.

“And you?” The Arch Magus necromancer, Zassler, stared at Linley.

“Why should I tell you about myself? I didn’t ask you to tell me about yourself,” Linley said calmly. The Arch Magus necromancer was instantly stunned, not knowing what to say.

Right at this time, the black-robed man came back from the restroom.

“Bro, where the hell did you go?” Seeing that there was no one outside, the black-robed man’s face immediately changed, as he shouted loudly in anger.

Their task of watching over this Arch Magus necromancer was an extremely critical one. How could he not be furious when he saw that his brother had just disappeared without a word?

## When Experts Join Forces

This loud shout by the black-robed man not only frightened Linley and the Arch Magus necromancer, it also startled Lampson and the other three experts of the ninth rank on the second floor.

“What’s going on? Why is Xartes gone?” Lampson immediately pushed open his door, walking to the second-floor corridor and barking angrily.

At this time, the other three combatants of the ninth rank came out of their rooms as well.

Within Zassler’s room.

Hearing the loud shouts, the look on Zassler’s face changed. He immediately instructed the nearby Linley, “You killed one combatant of the ninth rank, but there are five remaining. I will take care of three of them. You handle the other two. Don’t tell me you aren’t able to do so.”

Zassler was quite confident in his ability to deal with three combatants of the ninth rank.

“You only need to kill one,” Linley said calmly. At the same time, Linley quietly awaited the opponents to gather outside. When they did so, Bebe and Haeru would ambush them from behind, while he and the Arch Magus necromancer would attack from the front. This pincer attack would make it even harder for their opponents to flee.

Hearing Linley’s words, Zassler couldn’t help but sneer, “You really dare to make all sorts of wild boasts.”

“Bro!” At this moment, the black-robed man saw the corpse of Xartes. He immediately let out a howl of grief, while also noticing that there were now two men inside the room.

Like a gust of wind, the four other combatants of the ninth rank descended

from the higher floors.

Lampson and the others stared at Zassler, then at Linley. The expressions on their face changed.

“Hello, everyone. Last time we fought, it wasn’t as fun as it should have been. Let’s play again.” The Arch Magus necromancer, Zassler, beamed happily at the five combatants of the ninth rank in front of him.

“The antimagic shackles are broken,” a silver-haired old expert of the ninth rank said in shock.

But Lampson was staring at Linley.

“Cardinal Lampson. Long time no see.” Linley held his adamantine heavy sword in his hands, his dark gold eyes shooting a cold, merciless glare towards these men.

Almost all of the high-level combatants of the Radiant Church knew about the terrifying appearance Linley had when transformed.

“Linley!”

Lampson’s voice was very low, and his facial expression was dark.

“You are the Linley who killed six of my comrades?” Xartes’ younger brother, that black-robed man, stared at Linley in disbelief. “How is that possible?”

The Arch Magus necromancer, Zassler, also stared at Linley in surprise. From the reaction of the Radiant Church’s squad, this ‘Draconian’ who had rescued him apparently was quite formidable. “Oh, your name is Linley? And it seems you are even more famous than me?”

Linley just stared coldly at the enemies. “Enough talk. Let’s do this.”

“My men are ready. We can move at any time.” The Arch Magus necromancer, Zassler, laughed delightedly. Suddenly, two golden skeletal archers manifested behind him.

Linley was startled.

He had heard that Necromantic Magic possessed the Wraith Call ability, but this was the first time he had seen it in action. These two golden skeletal

archers had auras that weren't the slightest bit weaker than combatants of the ninth rank.

"Linley, you seem to be quite powerful. Let's have a little competition and see who kills more." Zassler laughed delightedly, while at this moment, three powerful, three-meter-tall golden-furred zombies appeared at the door. These golden-furred zombies had jade-green eyes.

Two golden skeletal archers, and three golden-furred zombies. Each of them had the power of a combatant of the ninth rank.

Combined, they made up a force of five combatants of the ninth rank!

Lampson looked at Zassler, then looked at Linley. Grinding his teeth, he ordered in a low voice, "Retreat. We leave now!" Lampson truly did not wish to give this order.

In order to capture Zassler, they had sacrificed so much.

But once they learned the secrets of Necromantic Magic from Zassler, the Radiant Church would totally be capable of secretly raising an entire squad of necromancers.

"Bebe. Haeru. Now!" Linley mentally ordered.

"Kill."

The Arch Magus necromancer, Zassler, issued a callous order, while at the same time he began to continue mumbling the words to yet another magical spell. Although these skeletal archers and golden-furred zombies had the power of ninth rank combatants, they were only equivalent to early-stage ninth rank combatants.

He, Zassler, had two summons which he was extremely proud of.

In order to subdue these two creatures he had encountered in the plane of undead, he had expended a tremendous amount of effort. Zassler's lips were constantly moving as he mumbled the words to this spell. The difficulty of summoning these two undead was far greater than the first five.

"Flee, now! The Undead Dragon is about to arrive!" The two Special Executors, the two Ascetics, and the Cardinal all hurriedly fled from the

courtyard.

But right at this moment...

“Swish!” “Swish!”

Two golden arrows split the air, piercing directly towards the two Ascetics. At the same moment, two black blurs suddenly appeared from outside the courtyard.

“Lampson. Not one of you will escape,” Linley’s callous voice rang out, while at the same time, Linley charged towards them like a bolt of lightning.

Linley’s movement speed really was incredibly fast. As a peak-stage ninth rank combatant who had inherited the speed inherent to the Armored Razorback Wurm, was supported by the Supersonic spell, and also borrowed the ‘imposing force’ of the world... Linley’s speed far surpassed those two Special Executors, to say nothing of the Ascetics and the Cardinal.

“Roaaaar!”

The Blackcloud Panther, Haeru, charged recklessly at one of the Special Executors, clawing and biting at him. Terrified, the Special Executor immediately chopped viciously at the Blackcloud Panther with his sword.

“Ah!” The Special Executor’s skull was caved in by the panther’s paw, while his sword hadn’t managed to injure Haeru in the slightest.

“Hrmph.” The Blackcloud Panther was filled with contempt.

In the past, Linley had used the adamantine heavy sword while at the peak-stage of the ninth rank in Dragonform, yet still hadn’t been able to do anything. In the end, he had been forced to rely on both the Supergravity Field as well as the Airwings spells before he could force the panther to submit.

In terms of defense, the Blackcloud Panther was even more formidable than Linley, and only a whisker inferior to Bebe.

“Slash, slash!”

Catching the Special Executor totally off-guard, Bebe pierced straight through his defense, driving his claws into the man’s chest and ripping the man’s heart out.

In the blink of an eye, the two magical beasts had killed two combatants of the ninth rank.

“Groooooowl!” The Blackcloud Panther turned and attacked the nearby Ascetic. The Ascetic was truly stunned. Two magical beasts had just popped up out of nowhere and killed two Special Executors.

Bebe charged towards the other Ascetic as well.

The two Ascetics and Lampson were all truly in states of shock. They specialized in light magic, but all magic took time to set up. The spells they could instacast wouldn't be of use against these two magical beasts.

“Lampson!”

Linley let out a loud roar. Wielding his adamantine heavy sword, like a demonic god, he chopped down with his black adamantine heavy sword, causing the very air to vibrate with the force of the blow.

Lampson discovered, to his terror, that the space above him had been totally locked in.

“Lin-”

In the moment of his death, Lampson thought back to that first time he had encountered Linley. That was the day that the sculpture, ‘Awakening From the Dream’ was being auctioned. At that time, Linley was an optimistic, joyful young genius. But a few years later, Linley had become so frightening. And today, Linley was going to take his life.

“Bam.”

Before Lampson's unwilling eyes, Linley's adamantine heavy sword slashed down directly on his body. At this moment, Linley managed to link together some of the scattered insights he had regarding the new level he was trying to attain.

It was like the pulse of the world itself.

Those deep tremors. Those irresistible vibrations. The terrifying force that the adamantine heavy sword was carrying suddenly transformed into a ‘pulse-like’ rhythm which entered Lampson's body.

Lampson's entire body trembled once, and then he collapsed to the ground. Not a single wound could be seen on Lampson's body... but blood was flowing from Lampson's ear and nose.

If someone were to cut open Lampson's skin, they would discover that Lampson's internal organs had all disintegrated.

At this time, Bebe and Haeru finished off the two remaining Ascetics. This killing spree was simply too perfectly formulated. The undead creatures which Zassler had summoned, along with Linley's fearsome appearance, had actually frightened Lampson's group so much that they had directly fled, but just as they had reached the walls, they were caught totally off-guard by Bebe and Haeru, these two unspeakably terrifying magical beasts.

The end result was plain for everyone to see.

Bebe, Haeru, and Linley had killed five combatants of the ninth rank! If they counted the person whom Linley had killed at the beginning, they had killed six.

"Grooooowl."

Right at this moment, in the middle of the courtyard, the space began to rumble as a dimensional crack appeared. An enormous, black dragon's head stretched out through the dimensional crack.

Wraith Call – Undead Dragon!

"But... but..." Zassler stared at Linley, as well as his black Shadowmouse and the Blackcloud Panther, Haeru. He was totally shocked, totally speechless.

Just now, he had been very arrogant, going so far as to say that he would deal with three of them, if Linley could handle two.

But before his undead creatures had killed a single person, Linley and his magical beasts had killed all of the combatants.

"Mr. Zassler, there's no need to finish summoning this Undead Dragon, I think. Or did you want to test it out against Bebe, or perhaps Haeru?" Linley said calmly.

The leathery face of the Arch Magus necromancer, Zassler, twitched. And then, he banished the Undead Dragon back to the plane of undead.

“Linley, those two magical beasts of yours are indeed rather powerful. But my Undead Dragon isn’t weak either. What’s more, the Undead Dragon isn’t the only creature I possess. I also have an Ancient Wight.” Zassler sneered. “You must understand, so long as the undead realm remains, the army available to a necromancer is endless.”

Linley truly was frightened by Zassler’s words.

Actually, in his heart, Zassler knew that taming an undead creature in the undead realm was no easy feat. They had to be subdued one at a time, after all. In the past, when he had subdued this Undead Dragon, he had sacrificed many other undead creatures.

“Let’s hurry up and clean up this courtyard. Don’t let the Radiant Church know what happened here,” Linley said immediately.

Zassler immediately began to issue orders to his undead creatures.

Those two golden skeletal archers and the three golden-furred zombies very obediently began to dispose of the corpses. They were quite efficient. Very soon, all the corpses had vanished.

“Linley.” Zassler looked at Linley with interest. “From what Lampson said, it seems you are quite famous. Tell me about yourself?”

Linley glanced at Zassler. “Shut your mouth. Quiet.”

Seeing Linley’s absolutely emotionless golden eyes, Zassler began to laugh. “Linley, it seems as though you have quite a large grudge against the Radiant Church, am I right?”

“So what if I do?” Linley responded this time.

“What sort of grudge?” Zassler immediately asked.

“I won’t stop till one of us is destroyed.” Linley’s voice was quiet, but it was like the sinister wind which blew in the undead realm, capable of making one’s soul shudder.

Zassler’s eyes immediately lit up. He excitedly said, “Haha, good. Linley, it seems you have some ability. How about this. You assist me, and together, we will deal with the Radiant Church.”



“Me, assist you? You be the leader?” Linley looked at Zassler.

Zassler had to admit to himself that he felt just the slightest bit uncomfortable when Linley stared at him with those dark golden eyes.

“No need to differentiate between who is the lead, and who is not. The two of us will work together.” As a necromancer, Zassler’s close-combat abilities were very poor. In addition, his undead creatures took a certain amount of time to summon.

Linley’s dark gold eyes stared at Zassler for quite some time.

“Fine. I accept,” Linley said finally. Linley had to admit that joining forces with a necromancer could indeed make him stronger.

Zassler immediately exulted. “Haha, wonderful. With the two of us joining forces, what have we to fear? Heidens, there will come a day when I kill you, you old bastard. Linley, who in the Radiant Church do you wish to kill?” Zassler was certain that Linley had to have had a major grudge against someone in the Radiant Church, for him to hate it so.

“Who?”

Linley shook his head. “I intend to destroy the Radiant Church and tear out its roots.”

“The Radiant Church?” Zassler was truly stunned for a moment, then he laughed loudly. “Haha, wonderful, excellent! When the time comes, we will kill Heidens together and annihilate the Radiant Church!”

But Linley’s face was cold and emotionless.

“Let’s go.” Linley led Bebe and Haeru towards the exit.

“Where to?” Zassler immediately followed.

“Do you have any destination?” Linley asked.

“None.” Zassler shook his head.

Linley said calmly, “Then starting today, just follow me.” As he spoke, Linley led Bebe and Haeru into the darkness. Zassler started, then mumbled to himself, “It seems that by following this Linley, the future will be quite exciting.”

And thus, this eight-hundred-year-old Arch Magus necromancer followed Linley into the night.

## Mutual Trust

There were no stars in the night sky, nor was there a moon.

Linley and the Arch Magus necromancer, Zassler, the Blackcloud Panther, Haeru, and Bebe made their way through the secluded alleyway. At this time, Linley returned to his human form.

“Crackle”

Linley’s ripped and torn pants were instantly consumed by flame. And then, with a flip of the hand, Linley retrieved yet another pair of pants as well as a form-fitting black shirt. In the blink of an eye, Linley redressed himself.

“Oh, this Linley kid is even more special than I thought.” Zassler’s green eyes stared at Linley. How could Zassler not know what had just happened? Linley clearly had an interspatial ring.

He, Zassler, had an interspatial ring of his own as well.

Over four hundred years ago, in the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, when he was collecting undead slaves, he had accidentally raised a half-shattered skeleton that had been dead for who knows how many years. On the skeleton’s finger, there was an interspatial ring.

At the time, Zassler had been wildly overjoyed.

Based on his observations of the surroundings, Zassler guessed that this skeleton most likely had engaged in battle against magical beasts countless thousands of years ago, and then crawled into a deep valley where it had died of its heavy injuries. But after thousands of years, the local geography had changed and the valley had been sealed off.

As an eight-hundred-plus-year-old Arch Magus necromancer, it was understandable for him to be in possession of an interspatial ring. But this young man in front of him clearly was very young. Where did he acquire one?

“Let’s move, fast.” Linley finished dressing himself and let out a quiet order.

“Linley, I find myself more and more curious about you.” Zassler’s laugh was so very sinister.

Linley glanced at him sideways. “Zassler, remember. In the future, without my permission, you are not to call me by my real name. Just call me ‘Ley.’”

Zassler’s eyebrows twitched. “I understand. You are afraid your identity will be revealed.”

Actually, Linley’s name was a relatively famous one in the O’Brien Empire as well. But this was primarily in the field of sculpture. Sculpture aficionados knew a great deal about Linley. A sixteen-year-old who was able to carve a sculpture on the level of the Ten Masterpieces? How could they not be filled with admiration towards him?

Unfortunately, Zassler, that old philistine, had no interest in sculpture.

They hurried along the way.

“Where are we going?” Zassler asked quietly while maintaining his high rate of movement.

“Outside the city,” Linley said calmly.

“But this isn’t the direction of the city gate, is it?” Zassler asked suspiciously.

“Must we leave the city by the city gate?” Linley glanced at Zassler, who immediately understood what Linley meant.

“But it isn’t ten o’clock at night yet. The city gates haven’t shut yet. We absolutely can depart by the city gates if we wish,” Zassler objected.

“I’m not certain of the forces that the Radiant Church has in the prefectural city of Cerre. Perhaps they have people planted amongst the gate guards here. If you go by that route... it’s possible that they will recognize you. After all, aside from those six experts from the headquarters of the Radiant Church, there are others who have seen you today and knew that you were heading towards that residence,” Linley said calmly.

Zassler nodded.

On the way to being locked into the residence, there had indeed been another group of people within the residence, all of whom clearly were the Radiant Church's people in the prefectural city of Cerre. Originally, there were servants there to serve Lampson and the others as well.

But Lampson was extremely careful. He was afraid of the possibility that these people had been infiltrated, and thus all of the servants had been sent away.



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Linley and Zassler quickly arrived at the high city walls. Those twenty-meter-high walls were more than enough to render Zassler speechless.

"There's no way I can get over." Zassler was quite blunt.

He was an Arch Magus necromancer. His physical condition was on par with an ordinary fighter of the third rank. But for him to leap over a twenty, thirty-meter-high wall was impossible.

"Haeru." Linley looked at his Blackcloud Panther.

"Groooooowl." This two-meter-tall, four-meter-long, handsome black panther, Haeru, stared at the Arch Magus necromancer Zassler with his cold eyes.

"Ride on Haeru's back," Linley instructed.

Zassler no longer hesitated, immediately leaping onto Haeru's back. Standing on Haeru's neck, Bebe also gave Zassler a challenging look. Zassler, however, didn't dare contend against these two magical beasts.

He had clearly seen the results of that battle just then. Given his judgment, he could clearly tell that both the black Shadowmouse and the black panther were magical beasts of the ninth rank. Without having his undead minions ready, he, an Arch Magus necromancer, didn't dare irritate magical beasts of the ninth rank.

"Let's go."

With a leap, Linley flew into the air like an arrow, vaulting over thirty meters with a single bound, easily flipping past the wall and landing on the other side.

“Swoosh.” With a mighty bound, Haeru transformed into a black blur and easily leapt past the twenty-meter-high city wall.

On the wild grass outside the city.

“Whoah. This panther is quite fast.” Zassler clutched his chest, letting out a shocked breath. As he spoke, he dismounted.

“Stay on,” Linley said immediately. “Haeru, let’s go back now.”

Linley immediately executed the ‘Supersonic’ spell on himself. Linley quickly hurried towards their mountain valley home, moving as fast as the wind, but Haeru easily maintained pace with him.

Scant minutes later, Zassler and Linley arrived at the mountain valley.

“Starting today, you will live here. If you want to leave, it’s best if you change your appearance first,” Linley said calmly. Looking at his surroundings, Zassler nodded with satisfaction. “I like secluded areas. This place is very much suited for my training.”

That very night, Linley built a wooden room for Zassler as well.

Late at night, when Linley was seated on the grass, preparing to quietly train, he suddenly sensed that from Zassler’s wooden room, there was a dense, deathly aura emanating from within. No wonder Zassler liked secluded areas. In places where there were many people, Zassler wouldn’t dare train in such an open, unrestrained manner.

“Necromancer.” Thinking back to the information he had read about necromancers, Linley couldn’t help but feel some fear.

Generally speaking, the older a necromancer was, the more powerful his spiritual energy was, and the more terrifyingly powerful he was. Because, with enough time, they could amass an enormous number of undead minions.

“At the courtyard, Zassler’s undead minions were all of the ninth rank. Most likely, he also has an ocean’s worth of middle-rank undead minions as well.” Linley had heard that an Arch Magus necromancer could be considered an entire terrifying army by himself.

An Arch Magus necromancer was totally capable of summoning a massive

army of hundreds of thousands of minions to do battle.

And, in wars, as long as he could kill his opponents, the necromancer would be able to create undead slaves out of their corpses, controlling the deceased warriors of his opponents. His opponent's corpses would do his bidding and wage war against his enemies.

A necromancer's army only grew with each battle.

But of course, the pre-requisite for that was that the necromancer have sufficient spiritual energy.

"In addition, I've heard it said that necromancers have more than just the Wraith Call ability or the ability to create undead slaves. I've heard that there are some unique, sinister necromantic spells."

Necromancers were most famous for their plagues.

In historical records, there was indeed a case where, because of a single necromancer, a huge epidemic had occurred, costing tens of millions of people their lives. This was also the reason why, when Linley had seen Holmer using poison, Linley had wondered if Holmer was a necromancer.



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Dawn. The sky slowly brightened.

The Arch Magus necromancer, Zassler, retracted his spiritual energy out of the undead realm and back into his body. Opening his eyes, a small smile appeared on his face. "Yesterday really was my lucky day."

"Not only did I regain my liberty, in the undead realm, I even managed to subdue a Black Knight Captain. Although it cost me one of my golden-furred zombies, the cost was worth it." Zassler was very happy.

Although golden-furred zombies were also of the ninth rank, compared to a Black Knight Captain, they were much weaker. A Black Knight Captain was roughly on the same level of power as the Undead Dragon. It could be considered a peak-stage creature of the ninth rank.

Right now, under Zassler's control were three undead minions of the peak-stage ninth rank – An Undead Dragon, an Ancient Wight, and a Black Knight Captain. At the same time, he also had available to him two golden-furred zombies and two golden skeletal archers.

Three peak-stage ninth rank minions, four ordinary ninth-rank minions.

This was the most powerful force available to Zassler. As for undead minions of the eighth and seventh ranks, he had far more. After all, in the undead realm, a high-class undead could enslave many lower ranked undead.

For example, those two golden skeletal archers controlled an army of five hundred thousand skeletons.

As for the Black Knight Captain, he had a number of Black Knights of the eighth rank under his command.

A necromancer, especially an eight-hundred-plus-year-old Arch Magus necromancer, definitely could be considered a terrifying one-man army. This was no joke.

"Hrm?" As he walked out of his wooden room, Zassler's eyes immediately widened.

Because right now, Linley was quietly standing on top of the pond, his eyes closed. His body seemed to be feather-light, and he didn't sink down at all into the water.

"This is..." Zassler was extremely amazed.

Zassler knew very well that Linley was not a Saint-level combatant. After transforming, Linley was only a peak-stage ninth rank, while in his human form, he was most likely even weaker. But right now, Linley was standing there as though he weighed nothing at all.

"Mr. Zassler." Linley suddenly opened his eyes, a rare smile on his face. At the same time, he walked over on the surface of the pond, as easily as though he were walking on solid land.

"We can be considered allies now. I want to know a few things about the Radiant Church," Linley said directly.



Zassler chuckled, then nodded. "Even if you didn't ask me, I would tell you. Right. Before this, we should show some mutual trust in each other. I really don't know much about you at all."

"Linley. Full name, Linley Baruch. 21 years old. Beneath the Saint-rank, no one in the world is a match for me," Linley said calmly, but his words were extremely confident.

As a peak-stage Dragonblood Warrior of the ninth rank, he could already be considered invincible save against Saint-levels. When combining that with the adamantine heavy sword which he could use with the 'impose' level at maximum proficiency now, and more importantly with Linley's supportive abilities as a dual-element magus of the eighth rank... Linley's power could rise to an amazing level.

"Dragonblood Warrior. No wonder." Only now did Zassler understand that Linley wasn't a Draconian. Suddenly, Zassler stared. "What did you say? 21 years old?"

"And?" Linley looked at Zassler.

Linley knew very well that this Arch Magus necromancer was definitely a very proud person. If Linley wasn't able to totally overawe him, most likely their teamwork would be very difficult to manage.

"How is that possible?" Zassler was rather shocked. But then, he laughed. "Haha, I'm different. The older we necromancers are, the more of an advantage we have. This year, I'll be 866 years old," Zassler proudly announced his age.

"Linley, you say that you are invincible aside from the Saint-levels. I don't really believe it," Zassler said calmly. "My army of undead minions reaches into the millions, and I have three peak-stage undead minions of the ninth rank."

At this time, both sides were trying to forcibly suppress the other. In addition, by letting each other know exactly how powerful they were, they would be able to coordinate their teamwork better as well.

"Zassler." Linley glanced at him coldly. "I admit that if I were to fight against your entire army of undead, I wouldn't be able to fight through them. However, I have two peak-stage magical beasts of my own. And I've forgotten to tell you

something. I'm not only a Dragonblood Warrior. I am also a dual-element magus of the eighth rank. Your human wave tactics are of no use against me."

Zassler was now totally stunned.

He could accept that as a Dragonblood Warrior, Linley could reach the peak of the ninth rank as a warrior at 21 years of age.

But a 21-year-old dual-element magus of the eighth rank was absolutely terrifying.

After all, the hardest part of magus training was cultivating spiritual energy. There was simply no way to avoid it. For a 21-year-old to have such a terrifying amount of spiritual energy was something that Zassler didn't even dare to think about.

"A dual-element magus of the eighth rank. 21 years old?" Zassler murmured. "Is this the number one magus genius in all of history?"

When Linley was seventeen, he had reached the seventh rank as a magus. This was the second youngest in history.

But a 21-year-old dual-element magus of the eighth rank? This was the first in history.

"When I reached the eighth rank as a necromancer, I believe I was around four hundred years old." When Zassler thought about how old he had been, he found that there was nothing more he could say.

## Secrets of the Church

Zassler knew that for a 21-year-old to reach such a level meant that in the future, he would eventually leave Zassler far behind in the dust.

“We can be considered to know something about each other’s abilities now. Didn’t you want to know about the Radiant Church?” A look of self-confidence was on Zassler’s face. With regards to the secrets of the Radiant Church, he, Zassler, probably knew as much as the high-level members of the Church itself.

“Speak.” Linley immediately began to listen carefully.

Zassler nodded. “Simply put, the Radiant Church’s power, on the most superficial level, includes Missionaries, Priests, Bishops, Vicars, and Cardinals. They also have the eight ace regiments of knights, as well as powerful Knights of the Radiant Temple. This can be considered their second military force. In addition, they also have the servants of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal as well as a large number of Ascetics.”

Hearing this, Linley was silent. He knew all this already.

“But aside from these overtly visible forces, they also have two hidden forces.” These words immediately aroused Linley’s interest.

Ascetics and Executors of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal were considered their ‘overtly visible’ forces?

“These two hidden forces are extremely formidable, more powerful than any of their other forces. The first hidden force is known as the Zealots!” Zassler frowned. “These Zealots are very terrifying. They have a very strange power which is not light-style power. I can’t explain it either.”

This was the first time that Linley had heard the term ‘Zealot’.

“And the second force?” Linley asked.

Zassler’s face was solemn. “The second force is the most powerful force the

Radiant Church has to offer, their true trump card. They will never use this force unless things reach the final, most critical point. These are... Descended Angels!”

“Angels?!” Linley’s heart shook.

In the past, at the Ernst Institute, Linley had read quite a bit regarding Angels. The impression he had of Angels was that they were powerful, extremely powerful.

“Because of the restrictions of having fleshly bodies, Descended Angels will not be at the peak of their power. However, even the weakest Descended Angel will be a combatant of the ninth rank. Many are Saint-levels. Descended Angels are the true, most terrifying force available to the Radiant Church.” Zassler sighed.

Linley’s heart was filled with shock.

“Zassler, I’ve read about Angels before. The descriptions of the most powerful Angels say that they have the power of Deities. If the Radiant Church has a large number of powerful Angels, they shouldn’t be in their current state,” Linley probed.

Zassler shook his head. “No. The power of the Descended Angels will depend on the human vessels the Radiant Church provides.”

“Human vessels?” Linley looked questioningly at Zassler.

“Right. Angels are unable to create dimensional rifts and directly descend into our world. Their only option is to use some special methods and descend into the body of a human. The strength or weakness of this human body will determine how much power the Angel can wield,” Zassler explained.

“Linley, although this world has ninth-rank combatants and Saint-level combatants... if it weren’t for their battle-qi, their physical strength would be quite a bit weaker. Normal humans can only reach the sixth rank based on their muscular strength.”

Linley agreed with this assessment.

“When an Angel descends into a body with muscular strength of the sixth

rank, they can at most wield power of the ninth rank. Thus, the Radiant Church needs bodies of the seventh rank, or even higher,” Zassler said with certainty.

“Even more powerful bodies?” Linley frowned.

“Although normal human bodies can generally only reach the sixth rank, there are still some geniuses who are extremely powerful. Since youth, they possess boundless strength. It can be said that they are inherently powerful. These people with special natural gifts might reach the limit of the seventh rank based on muscle power alone. And a body which can naturally reach the seventh rank in power should be enough to allow an Angel to wield power of the Saint level.”

Hearing Zassler’s words, Linley couldn’t help but frown.

Because Linley’s great grandfather had been able to train to the seventh level just based on his muscular strength. But afterwards, Linley’s great grandfather had died in battle. In the past, Linley had never questioned this, but now...

“Could it have been possible that my great grandfather was actually taken away by the Radiant Church for his body?” Linley was guessing.

In truth, all of the Four Supreme Warriors possessed tremendous innate physical gifts. All of them could train to an extremely powerful level just based on muscle strength.

Zassler continued, “This has caused the Radiant Church to scour the entire world for people with powerful bodies. The more powerful the body, the more powerful the Descended Angel will be. But it’s of no use. In this era, the Yulan continent has four Deity-level combatants. Faced with these Deity-level combatants, Saint-level combatants can do nothing but die.”

“Four Deity-level combatants?” Linley stared at Zassler in surprise. It seemed as though Zassler knew about the existence of that expert from the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts.

Zassler saw Linley’s surprise. Laughing, he said, “The four Deity-level combatants are humanity’s War God and High Priest, the magical beast who is the King of the Forest of Darkness, and the magical beast King of the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts who appeared on Apocalypse Day.”

“Linley, when I was being taught the secrets to Necromantic Magic, I

learned... that the bodies of Deities are at the Saint level in terms of physical strength alone,” Zassler said with certainty.

A Deity-level combatant could be said to be composed of his divine body, his divine spark, and the divine power he wielded. There was no way a Saint-level combatant could injure them at all.

“Thus, in order to wield the power of a Deity, the body alone must be at the Saint level in physical strength. Most likely, the Radiant Church is not able to manifest a Deity-level Angel. Even if high class Angels were to descend, they wouldn’t be able to use their deific power, due to being restricted by their physical bodies,” Zassler said confidently.

The teachings of Necromantic Magic were abstruse and profound. In addition, Zassler was over eight centuries old. He truly knew many things.

“Deity-level combatants!” Linley’s heart swelled with amazement.

Any of these four most powerful experts of the Yulan continent could shake the world with their might. On the Apocalypse Day, the appearance of Dylin had caused both the Radiant Church and the Cult of Shadows to flee and avoid him.

The Radiant Church had their Descended Angels. But then, what did the Cult of Shadows possess, for them to be equal to the Radiant Church for countless, untold years?

Despite that, both powers combined still didn’t dare to offend that Dylin, the King of the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts.

From this, one could clearly tell how ineffable the power of a Deity-level combatant was.

“Who knows when I will have power like that.” Linley was filled with eagerness and hope towards this sort of power.



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Zassler continued to tell Linley a great deal of information regarding the Radiant Church.

“The Radiant Church cares the most about two things. The first is finding extremely powerful bodies. The second is to find extremely pure souls.” As Zassler said this, Linley’s face changed.

Pure souls?

His own mother had died as a result of this.

“Supposedly, the ‘Radiant Sovereign’ the Radiant Church worships only needs two things. The first is the worship of his followers. The second is pure souls. The purer the souls offered by the Church, the greater the gifts that the Radiant Sovereign will bestow upon them.”

By now, Linley had a good understanding of the Radiant Church.

The reason why the Radiant Church sacrificed pure souls to the Radiant Sovereign was the same reason they searched for powerful bodies. It was because they wanted to acquire powerful Descended Angels.

“Linley, in the Yulan continent, the Radiant Church has hidden reserves of power in every location. After all, the power of a religion is extremely formidable,” Zassler said with a sigh. “But in the Four Great Empires, the Radiant Church is fairly weak. In the Anarchic Lands, however, their influence is quite powerful.”

“Anarchic Lands?”

A map drifted to the forefront of Linley’s memories.

East of the O’Brien Empire, there was an area that was slightly larger than the O’Brien Empire itself. In the center of this area was an enormous forest – the Forest of Darkness.

The Forest of Darkness was thousands of kilometers wide, and thousands of kilometers long as well. This enormous forest took up half of the land in this area.

North of the Forest of Darkness, were the Eighteen Northern Duchies, roughly the same size as one of the O’Brien Empires administrative provinces.

South of the Forest of Darkness were the 48 Anarchic Duchies. The total area of these duchies was roughly half the size of the O’Brien Empire. This could be

considered the most politically chaotic area in the Yulan continent, as the 48 Anarchic Duchies engaged in constant warfare.

“The Radiant Church and the Cult of Shadows are the two most powerful religions in the Anarchic Lands,” Zassler said.

Linley could imagine.

In the war-torn Anarchic Lands, it was only natural for those poor commoners to turn to religion for solace.

“Alright, I’ve talked so much that my mouth is dry. Let’s eat breakfast,” Zassler laughed loudly.

Zassler and Linley were both in possession of interspatial rings, and both their rings contained fine wine. Drinking wine while eating freshly plucked fruit, the two of them continued to discuss their plans for dealing with the Radiant Church.

“Oh, right. I suddenly remember something,” Zassler suddenly said.

“What’s that?” Linley looked at Zassler

Zassler chuckled. “This time, when I was being escorted under guard, we ran into another squad of the Radiant Church’s men. This squad was also escorting a group of people.”

“Who? An expert like you?” Linley asked.

If they were experts, then he and Zassler would go rescue them. After all, each of them had enmity with the Radiant Church. If they banded together, they would only be stronger.

“No. It was two adorable girls.” Zassler shook his head. “Originally, when that squad and Lampson’s squad met up, I saw those girls. I must say, those two girls were as innocent and pure as angels. Based on my familiarity with souls, I am quite certain that these two girls have extremely pure souls.”

Practitioners of Necromantic Magic, compared with the other types of magi, were undoubtedly the most experienced when it came to souls.

“However, in the eyes of the Radiant Church, my importance far outweighed the importance of those two girls. Lampson and the others took me away at



high speed, while the two girls were taken away by another squad, which was moving quite a bit more slowly,” Zassler said.

“So your intention is...?” Linley looked questioningly at Zassler.

Zassler chuckled, “My intention is for us to go rescue those two girls. After all, that squad didn’t have many experts in it. It only had a single combatant of the eighth rank.”

In the eyes of Zassler and Linley, an expert of the eighth rank really was nothing.

“How is it that an Arch Magus necromancer like you would be so kind-hearted as to go rescue two girls?” Linley looked at Zassler.

Zassler laughed. “I delight in disrupting the affairs of the Radiant Church whenever I can. And what’s more, with such extremely pure souls, the two of them might be suitable for training in Necromantic Magic.”

The requirements for learning Necromantic Magic were terrifyingly high.

This was why in the entire Yulan continent, the number of necromancers was extremely, extremely low. The soul was a person’s most important quality, and even the Radiant Sovereign desired to acquire pure souls. From this, one could tell how important a pure soul was. In order to learn Necromantic Magic, an extremely pure soul was needed.

“You should know what trajectory they were on, right?” Linley asked.

Zassler nodded his head. “The path they took should be identical to the path that I had been taken on, unless this squad has already received word of the deaths of Lampson and his men. Only then might they suddenly change their direction.”

“Then let’s go.” Linley immediately rose.

“Groooowl.” Bebe and Haeru, who had been lying on the nearby grass, both stood up. These two magical beasts were very excited. By their nature, magical beasts were violent and barbaric, loving to do battle.

“Right now?” Zassler was a bit startled. “We’ve destroyed all trace of Lampson and his men. Even if the Radiant Church’s people discovered that the

manor was empty, they probably would only think that Lampson and his men had left. They wouldn't discover that Lampson is dead this fast. Even if they found out that Lampson and his men were dead, they wouldn't be able to send the message to the other squad so quickly."

"Leave nothing to chance at all. We will immediately set out on the same path that you were taken on and trace our way back," Linley said immediately.

Zassler, helpless against Linley, could only shake his head, let out a sigh, then rise to his feet as well.

## Flower-Like Sisters

Dawn. The air was clear and fresh.

Ruskin was leading his two subordinates as they moved at high speed in the direction of the manor where Lampson and the others had settled into last night.

“I must make sure that we take excellent care of Lord Lampson and the others. A single word from Lampson could most likely get us all promoted.” Ruskin was feeling rather frustrated though. “Unfortunately, it seemed as though Lord Lampson is being extremely cautious. They didn’t allow a single attendant to enter the manor.”

As he was thinking these things, Ruskin walked to the gate.

“What’s going on? The gate isn’t shut?” Ruskin frowned. He knew that Lampson and the other lords were on a very important matter. They definitely wouldn’t leave the door open.

He entered the courtyard. As he did, he felt that the courtyard was a bit too quiet.

“Milords,” Ruskin called out.

But his voice echoed out in the courtyard without any response.

“The two of you, look around for me. I’ll go upstairs and see what I can find.” Ruskin had a very bad feeling about this. He immediately headed to the second floor, where Lampson and the others’ rooms had been located.

Every single door on the second floor was open. None were closed.

Entering Lampson’s room, Ruskin immediately frowned. The bed was in a used state, clearly not made. At the same time, at the head of the bed, there was a backpack.

“This isn’t right.”

Ruskin immediately entered another room. Indeed, the bed there was also in a messy state, and a backpack was on a table. As of yet, Ruskin hadn’t seen any problems... but he felt this wasn’t quite right.

“Lord Lampson didn’t even have the time to put on the backpack, and the same was true for the other lords as well. Could it be that something important occurred, forcing Lord Lampson and the others to immediately depart?” Ruskin frowned.

“Milord!” A frantic call from downstairs.

Ruskin’s face changed, and he immediately rushed down the hallway, then jumped down directly from the balcony to the courtyard.

“What is it?” Ruskin looked at his two subordinates.

“Milord, there are bloodstains here.” The two of them pointed at the wall.

Originally, Zassler had ordered his undead minions to destroy all traces of the deceased. Virtually all traces, including bloodstains, had indeed been removed. But when the Blackcloud Panther, Haeru, had smashed open that Special Executor’s skull with one paw, blood had splattered everywhere. Although those undead minions were very industrious and careful, there were still a few tiny traces remaining.

“Bloodstains. And the lords have all disappeared?”

Staring at the quiet courtyard, Ruskin felt as though an enormous boulder was pressing against his chest. “A battle occurred here. As for the lords, could it be that they are in pursuit?”

Ruskin knew how astonishingly powerful the six of these lords were. He didn’t believe that someone could kill these six lords.

Ruskin instructed his two subordinates, “The two of you, head out immediately towards the provincial capital of Basil. Report this news back.”

“Yes!”

But before the two subordinates had even reached the provincial capital of Basil, Linley’s group had already encountered the second squad mid-way.

“It’s them?” Linley, Bebe, Zassler, and Haeru were hiding in some tall, wild grass by the roadside.

Zassler looked at the four knights surrounding a carriage. Nodding, he said, “Right. It’s them. The two girls should be inside the carriage.”

“Inside the carriage?”

Linley frowned, then looked at Bebe. “Bebe, I expect that the carriage will have more than just those two girls. There should be people guarding the girls as well. Bebe, you are physically small. Your assignment will be to enter the carriage at high speed and kill those guards.”

Zassler nodded. “This squad should also have six people, all men. There should be two more men inside this carriage.”

“Did you hear that, Bebe? Kill the two men inside the carriage.” Linley laughed as he rubbed Bebe’s head.

Bebe hopped onto Linley’s shoulders, lifting his little head up confidently as he squeaked at Linley. “Boss. Have I, Bebe, ever let you down?”

Linley chortled lovingly.

“Let’s do this,” Linley said to him mentally.

Bebe immediately grew solemn as he stared at the carriage with his little eyes. And then, he quietly snuck through the tall grass, drawing closer to the carriage...

Within the carriage, there were two beautiful, jade-haired identical twin sisters. Their eyes were slightly red and swollen, and they were staring hatefully at the two men opposite of them.

“You bastards,” one of the two, the one whose eyes were slightly larger, cursed in a low voice.

The two men only smiled at them, not minding in the slightest.

“Rebecca, don’t curse anymore. Cursing these pieces of garbage is a waste of energy. And to think, we believed in the Radiant Church all these years and prayed to the Lord to bring us happiness. Who would’ve thought that they would be this vile.” The other girl’s eyes were also filled with hatred.

“Big sis.” Rebecca miserably clutched at her older sister’s hand.

Rebecca and Leena hailed from the 48 Anarchic Duchies. They had followed their father in believing in the Radiant Sovereign, but who would’ve thought that the Radiant Church would kill their parents, then abduct them.

With their parents dead, Rebecca and Leena were now without family.

And now, their future had turned to ashes. They couldn’t see any hope.

“Father. Mother.” Rebecca and Leena began to tremble as they thought of their parents. All these years, their parents had protected them, no matter how much chaos and war there had been in the Anarchic Lands.

But this time...

“Leena. Take your little sister and run.” Their father had tightly held onto a combatant of the seventh rank at the last moment of his life. Despite only being a warrior of the fifth rank, their father had managed to drag it out for a few seconds longer.

But unfortunately, the Radiant Church’s forces were too strong.

“God, please rescue us,” Leena was shouting in her heart. “So long as you can rescue us and give us a chance to seek revenge, I am willing to sacrifice everything, including my very soul.”

She had watched as her parents died. She wanted revenge.

Unfortunately. God was too far away from them. How would he be able to sense the desires of these two ordinary souls?

“Slash.” Suddenly, a very strange sound rang out.

Leena and Rebecca both turned in surprise. They only saw a black blur flash by. “Slash!” The sound rang out a second time, and blood spurted everywhere.

Rebecca and Leena stared in shock.

The heads of the two men who had been guarding them suddenly slumped down. Half of their neck had been cut off. They were unquestionably dead.

“Who was it?” The twin sisters stared in shock, then suddenly were overjoyed. They knew that someone had rescued them. They looked in all

directions, but they couldn't see their savior.

"Squeak, squeak." A sound rang out from beneath them.

Rebecca and Leena both lowered their heads, only to see an adorable little black mouse standing there, holding his head up in a very arrogant fashion. In a very human-like manner, it used its sharp claws to stroke its whiskers.

"A rat?" Both Rebecca and Leena were confused.

Bebe immediately grew angry, and he quickly jumped up while waving his little paws around wildly. He suddenly transformed into a black blur, flashing past them.

"It was the rat?" Rebecca and Leena began to understand.

Bebe had made no noise at all when he had killed those two. What's more, the carriage wheels continuously rumbled as the carriage rolled along the road. The four knights outside hadn't noticed a thing.

"Ah!"

Suddenly, a miserable scream from outside.

"Roaaaar!" A furious roar from a beast.

Rebecca and Leena looked at each other, then immediately pushed open the carriage door. The carriage driver had already collapsed, his fresh blood staining the carriage.

Rebecca and Leena quickly turned to look at the four knights.

But all they saw...

Was four devilish flashes of violet light. The three knights didn't have a chance to react before their heads went flying, while the warrior wearing black armor, Linley, landed gracefully in front of the carriage, the adamantine heavy sword on his back.

"Hello. You've just been freed," Linley said with a smile.

Seeing the powerful youngster in front of them, Rebecca and Leena were both somewhat stunned. In their eyes, those knights were extremely powerful. But it seemed as though to this youngster, those knights weren't even capable

of resisting for a moment.

“Rebecca and Leena. Hello there,” an ancient voice rang out. Only now did Zassler stand up from amidst the grassy field.

Seeing Zassler’s bony, decrepit body, as well as his extremely long, white eyebrows, Rebecca and Leena both called out in excitement, “Grandpa Zassler!”

They had travelled with Zassler for a time under common guard, so they knew each other.

“Grandpa Zassler, who is this lord?” Rebecca and Leena both looked curiously towards Linley. Suddenly, the two sisters noticed an enormous black panther was drawing near them. The panther’s cold, eerie eyes made both Rebecca and Leena feel frightened.

“Don’t be afraid. Haeru, stop scaring them,” Linley barked.

“Arooo.” Haeru made a placating voice towards Linley, then lowered his head and moved to the side, no longer daring to go frighten these twin sisters.

“Rebecca, Leena, this is Lord Linley. He isn’t any weaker than me.” Zassler chortled.

“Truly?” Rebecca and Leena stared at Linley in shock.

It wasn’t that they didn’t believe Linley was powerful; it was that they had seen how, when Zassler was being escorted, how much the Radiant Church had valued him. His jailors even had a Cardinal in their midst. Zassler had bragged to these sisters before about how he was capable of destroying a million-man army. It was only because he was surrounded and attacked by over ten combatants of the ninth rank that he was finally captured.

“Grandpa Zassler. It was this adorable mouse who saved us.” Rebecca and Leena immediately turned their heads to look at Bebe.

Bebe was currently standing on top of the carriage. He smirked at her, and then in the blink of an eye, he scurried onto Linley’s shoulders.

“You’re talking about Bebe? This is a magical beast which Linley tamed.” Zassler laughed as he introduced Bebe. Then he looked at Linley. “Linley. Let me introduce you. The younger sister, Rebecca, has slightly larger eyes. This one is



the older sister, Leena.”

Linley smiled and nodded.

“Zassler, should we send these two girls back, or...?”

In Linley’s opinion, these two girls were of no use to them. After all, no matter how pure their souls were, that didn’t mean they were very powerful.

“Grandpa Zassler, we have no place to go.” The older sister, Leena, immediately grew frantic. Begging, she said, “Grandpa Zassler, let us come with you. We know that you’ve killed the Radiant Church’s people. We also want to seek revenge for our parents.”

“Grandpa Zassler, we’re begging you.” Rebecca also beseeched him.

Zassler was planning to take these girls with him all along, with the intention of possibly inducting the twins into the dark art of Necromantic Magic. But he had to get Linley’s concurrence as well.

“Linley, let’s just take them along with us. Leena and Rebecca can both cook. We can’t always just eat roast meat in the valley, can we?” Zassler laughed.

Hearing his words, Rebecca and Leena hurriedly said, “We can do anything. We can fry, cook, clean.”

The two of them knew that without anyone to rely on, two beautiful girls such as them would have a disastrous fate. Seeing how highly Zassler seemed to value Linley’s opinion, they knew that Linley was undoubtedly an expert as well. This would give them an even greater chance of getting revenge.

Linley glanced at the two siblings. Facing their beseeching gaze, he nodded. “Fine.”

Rebecca and Leena’s eyes were instantly filled with a radiant, joyful light.

“Let’s go. We’re going back,” Linley instructed.

Linley’s group once more returned to the mountain valley, but this time with the addition of these two siblings. The four of them shared one point in common: They were filled with hatred towards the Radiant Church!

## Investigation

The Northwest Administrative Province, one of the seven major provinces of the O'Brien Empire, was a vast place, with tens of millions of citizens living in it. The Northwest Administrative Province's provincial capital, Basil, was the most developed of the province's cities. Within the walls of Basil alone were over a million people.

Within Basil, there were many ancient clans as well.

Count Perry was a relatively unassuming noble within Basil City. But amongst the ancient clans, he had quite a bit of influence. In addition, he was an extremely amiable person who never fought with others or struggled for influence. Virtually all of the nobles of the city were on good terms with him.

"Milord Count, you've returned." The guard outside the gate to his mansion smiled and bowed.

Count Perry was two hundred years old, and all his hair had turned silvery-white. But his long beard was as resplendent as it had been when he was young. Count Perry nodded slightly towards the guard, laughing warmly, "Oh, you've gotten a haircut. This haircut suits you. Did you get it done at old Locke's place?"

Hearing the words of praise, the guard was immediately all smiles. "Right. Mr. Locke is really quite skilled."

Beaming, Count Perry entered his mansion.

"Count Perry really is a nice man." The guard sighed to himself.

Count Perry really was a very kind person. This was the opinion of virtually everyone in the City of Basil. Count Perry didn't like to kill people and didn't like foul language. His every action demonstrated the ethics and nobility of a noble gentleman.

He entered the inner courtyard.

Count Perry's face suddenly sank.

"What is going on? How could something like this happen multiple times?" Count Perry was very frustrated. Just a few days ago, he had received the news that Cardinal Lampson and his Ascetics and Special Executors had disappeared within the prefectural city of Cerre. And now, he had received the news that the squad that had been escorting those two girls had been killed, and the girls had vanished.

Count Perry, after becoming the person responsible for the affairs of the Radiant Church in the Northwest Administrative Province of the O'Brien Empire, hadn't encountered such a thorny problem in a long time.

"I hope Lord Lampson hasn't met with any trouble."

Perry prayed silently.

If those two girls had been saved, then they had been saved. It wasn't of major concern. But Lampson and the other five were all experts of the ninth rank, and the person they were escorting was an Arch Magus necromancer of the ninth rank. This affair was the most important affair he had ever encountered after taking on the responsibilities for the Northwest Administrative Province.

"Milord Count." A hawk-nosed, tall and skinny man with curly hair walked in. Bowing respectfully, he said, "We've already completed our investigations regarding the missing lords."

Perry immediately looked at him. "Speak, fast."

"Based on our sympathizers' reports in the province, the lords still have yet to appear in any other cities. In addition, we've activated our entire network of sympathizers within the prefectural city of Cerre, yet we still haven't found anyone who saw the lords leaving the city," The hawk-nosed man replied respectfully.

Perry stared.

"What?" Perry's heart, previously tense, genuinely began to quiver. "Lampson

and the other lords couldn't possibly have remained in the prefectural city of Cerre this entire time. And if they did stay in Cerre, there would be some trace of them. Lampson and the others must have been attacked. It is also possible that Lampson and the others could have exited the prefectural city of Cerre late at night by leaping past the city walls."

"But even if that was the case, Lord Lampson should still have reappeared in a different city."

Perry was starting to become truly worried.

He had an extremely bad premonition.

"Could it be possible that Lord Lampson encountered the attack of a powerful foe and was killed?" Perry didn't dare to believe it. After all, Lampson and the others were all extremely powerful. To kill the six of them would require their opponents to number multiple experts of the ninth level, or a Saint-level combatant.

Perry suddenly looked at the hawk-nosed man. In a cold voice, he ordered, "Go at your fastest speed to find old Pori. Tell him to bring his three Bluewind Hawks to my study."

"Yes, milord Count." The hawk-nosed man knew exactly how important this situation was.

Perry hurriedly walked towards his study, and wrote three letters regarding Lampson's squad's affairs. Each copy was given to a different Bluewind Hawk and addressed to be delivered to the 'Sacred Isle'.

Ever since the Holy Capital, Fenlai City, had been destroyed, the Radiant Church set up their new headquarters on an island not too far away from the Yulan continent. They publicly announced this place as being the 'Sacred Isle'.



\*

Within the secluded valley outside the prefectural city of Cerre.

Right now, there were four wooden rooms here. One was for Linley and Bebe,

another was for Zassler, the third was for Rebecca and Leena, while the last one was for Haeru.

Dawn. The valley was very quiet and peaceful.

A pair of twin beauties, so lovely they seemed to be an illusion, were chatting and laughing while washing some clothes. These clothes belonged to them, Linley, and Zassler. Within the valley, they handled all the cooking and cleaning.

“Big sis. Do you think Grandpa Zassler gets tired from spending all his time in that room training?” Rebecca asked Leena quietly.

Zassler’s wooden room was totally shrouded by a black, deathly aura. That dense, black, deathly aura made Rebecca and Leena scared to even approach it.

Leena wrinkled her nose in a frown, an adorable sight. In consideration she said, “Perhaps powerful experts all have to train very hard like that. However, I still feel more comfortable watching big brother Linley train.” As she spoke, she turned to look at the distant blue pond, and Rebecca turned to look as well.

In the center of the pond, Linley was standing on the water, not sinking at all.

“Ripple, ripple.”

The water beneath Linley’s feet was a few centimeters lower than the water around him, because Linley was constantly releasing battle-qi from his feet, creating small waves in the middle of the pond.

Linley was wielding the adamantine heavy sword in his right hand. Occasionally, he would chop with it, while other times, he would just thrust. Every movement would cause the nearby air to tremble. It was as though the air was made of mud, and when the adamantine heavy sword chopped through it, there was a sense that it was breaking through space itself.

“This ‘Profound Truths of the Earth’ technique sometimes works, but sometimes doesn’t work.”

Linley’s forehead was furrowed.

When he had killed Lampson, although Linley had slashed Lampson with his sword, the outside of Lampson’s body hadn’t been injured in the slightest. His internal organs, however, had all been disintegrated.

As Linley viewed it, the third level of using the adamantine heavy sword was the 'impose' level. But the fourth level, was the 'Profound Truths of the Earth'.

Through using this heavy weapon, the adamantine heavy sword, Linley was now capable of unleashing the portion of the Laws of the Earth he had come to understand. This sort of attack could, in the blink of an eye, transform all the attacking power into vibrations which would enter the opponent's body.

This sort of vibrational attack, when fully mastered, could all but ignore an opponent's defense.

After all, the throbbing pulse of the world was something which had existed since the heavens and the earth had been formed. The secrets it contained within it were extremely deep and profound.

The principles of the 'Profound Truths of the Earth' was this:

Completely convert one's attacking power into the same sort of vibrations as the throbbing pulse of the world itself. When these vibrations entered the opponent's body, the opponent's internals would also begin to resonate. The resonance would be very powerful; after all, it had been created through Linley's attack power.

The body's internal organs weren't nearly as durable as a person's external defenses.

This sort of resonance could easily annihilate the opponent's internal organs, shaking them into tiny pieces.

"However, it is incredibly difficult to transform attack power into resonating vibrations." Linley understood that the battle-qi and strength he normally used was a totally different sort of attack, compared to this sort of 'resonance wave' attack.

Only by relying on his partial understanding of the Laws of the Earth was Linley able to convert his normal attacks into this sort of 'resonance wave' attack.

Per Linley's line of thought, the more 'resonance waves' were created, the more successful the power transformation had been.

“Sometimes, I can create over ten tremors in the blink of an eye, but other times, I can’t even create one.” Linley’s head hurt.

Linley understood that once his skill in using the heavy sword had reached this sort of level, he could already be considered as having entered the realm of using the ‘Laws of the Earth’.

But Linley was only able to grasp a small part of it.

“I can’t be too greedy. Right now, I shouldn’t focus too much on creating as many vibrations as possible. I should focus on just one resonance wave at a time.” Wielding the adamantine heavy sword in one hand, Linley’s face was very solemn.

Suddenly...

The adamantine heavy sword seemed to tear the air apart as it chopped down against the lake.

The strange thing was, not a single ripple was created on the surface of the lake. But suddenly, the entire lake began to emit a strange gurgling sound... and then, as though it had been lifted by a giant, the entire surface of the lake suddenly rose up, forming a one-meter-high wall of water.

“I succeeded again this time.”

Linley actually wasn’t too excited. He sometimes succeeded and sometimes failed when training with this ‘Profound Truths of the Earth’. He wasn’t able to reproduce the results with any regularity.

“Big brother Linley, time to eat.” Leena stood at the not-too-distant shore, laughing as she called out to him.

“Grandpa Zassler, time to eat! Stop training!” Rebecca began calling out from outside of Zassler’s wooden room.

With a flip of his hand, Linley sent the adamantine heavy sword flying into the air. When it landed, it landed neatly into its sheath. Linley had already fully mastered the ‘impose’ level, and the weight of the adamantine heavy sword didn’t impede Linley in the slightest.

On the grass, a rectangular table had been laid out.

Linley, Zassler, Rebecca, and Leena were seated around the table.

“Linley, what are you training on? I saw that bizarre training method you were working on. I’ve never seen a warrior train in such a manner,” Zassler said with curiosity.

Zassler had an extremely broad array of knowledge, but comparatively speaking, he didn’t know much about warrior training methods.

In truth, the most important thing for peak-stage experts of the ninth rank to enter the Saint level was to advance to a higher level of understanding. And for Saint-levels to advance to the Deity level, they also needed to understand the various laws of heaven and earth before they could attain a divine spark.

“I am training to gain a greater understanding. It is similar to a magus’ attempts to gain insights in the nature of the elemental essences,” Linley said casually.

Zassler immediately understood.

As an Arch Magus necromancer of the ninth rank, Zassler would often envelop himself with the boundless deathly aura from the undead realm to try and understand the elusive and illusory Laws of Death.

“Zassler, we killed Lampson and their men. Do you think the Radiant Church will be able to swallow their rage?” Linley was still concerned about this affair.

Zassler laughed very confidently. “Don’t worry. Let me tell you, the O’Brien Empire and the Radiant Church are very far apart. Even if they used flying magical beasts to send messages, they would need ten days or half a month. And if they were to send experts over, it would still take quite a while.”

“But if Saint-level experts were to fly here, they would be able to travel extremely fast,” Linley said solemnly.

After having killed so many of the Radiant Church’s men, it was very possible that the Radiant Church would send over Saint-level experts.

“Haha, don’t worry. They don’t dare send any Saint-level experts. Think about it. Why didn’t they send Saint-level experts to capture me, and instead send combatants of the ninth rank?” Zassler laughed loudly in delight.



Linley was curious about this as well.

If Saint-level experts had been sent after Zassler, capturing him would be very easy.

“Linley, you must understand, the O’Brien Empire is overseen by the War God. Long ago, the War God decreed that the Saint-level combatants of other nations would not be permitted to act wildly within the boundaries of the O’Brien Empire. If they came for the purpose of pleasure, that was fine, but if they were discovered engaging in acts of violence, the repercussions would be very severe.”

Zassler laughed coldly. “Even if the Radiant Church had ten times the courage, they wouldn’t dare go against the War God’s edict.”

The prestige of the War God could not be violated.

“Not necessarily.”

Linley shook his head. “Didn’t you just say it? ‘If they were discovered engaging in acts of violence.’ But what if they weren’t discovered? Remember, the prefectural city of Cerre doesn’t have any experts, and the War God is far away, in the imperial capital. If a Saint-level combatant suddenly appears in the prefectural city of Cerre, he wouldn’t necessarily know.”

Zassler was startled.

“The Radiant Church wouldn’t be that insane, right?” Zassler was a bit uncertain.

“Hard to say. After all, we killed six of their combatants of the ninth rank in one breath, this time. And when they were trying to capture you, you killed several of them as well. The Radiant Church won’t easily take this lying down, without a fight,” Linley said solemnly.

Zassler considered this for a while, then laughed. “It’s fine. Although the prefectural city of Cerre doesn’t have any Saint-level combatants, Basil City does have one. McKenzie. If Saint-level experts of the Radiant Church are sent here to fight with us, McKenzie would definitely notice it. McKenzie definitely wouldn’t permit the forces of the Radiant Church to act in such an unbridled manner on his turf. By then, with two Saint-level experts engaged in battle

here, the War God would definitely find out.”

“True.” Linley began to laugh as well.

If he was able to incite the Radiant Church into a battle against the O’Brien Empire, the Radiant Church would truly have bitten off more than it could chew.

“Linley, when I was under armed escort by Lampson and the others in the Northwest Administrative Province, the people whom the Radiant Church secretly placed within the Northwest Administrative Province went to go welcome them. I remember one of them was an old man named ‘Perry’, who was responsible for their affairs in the province. Judging from their conversation, that Perry should belong to the provincial capital of Basil.

Zassler laughed sinisterly. “Since we’re going to go to Basil anyways, we might as well dispose of that Perry fellow. Perhaps we might even discover some more secrets of the Radiant Church.”

“The manager for their affairs in the Northwest Administrative Province?” Linley’s eyes lit up. “Alright. We’ll head out tomorrow.”

## The Five Year Agreement

Keane, the governor of the prefectural city of Cerre, was just a fourteen-year-old child. Although he had his older sister Jenne helping him, in truth, how much did Jenne know herself? Most of the time, it was still up to their old servant, Lambert, to help out.

Lambert's clothes were very sharp and creased. His combed hair was gleaming as he slowly strolled about in the interior of the castle, appearing every inch the noble.

"Why must the young miss always be thinking about Lord Ley?" Lambert was sighing to himself. Jenne wanted to go visit Linley, but after Linley had told her that he didn't like being disturbed in the middle of his training, Jenne had no choice but to stay in the castle. Unfortunately, it had been a long time since Linley had come to the castle.

As he watched Jenne slowly grow thinner, Lambert felt very heartsick.

"Lambert."

Hearing his name called, Lambert turned around and saw Linley walking in by himself, dressed in a light blue warrior's outfit. Jenne and Keane had issued orders early on that if the castle guards were to see Linley, they were to let him in immediately without need for any notification.

"Lord Ley!" Lambert was extremely happy.

"Lord Ley, wait in the main hall for just a moment. I will immediately go inform the young master and the young miss."

Within the main hall.

Linley was quietly sitting on a chair. This trip to the provincial capital of Basil he was going to make with Zassler, Leena, and her sister was most likely one where they would end up staying in the area around Basil.

After all, Linley had to be wary of the Radiant Church secretly sending Saint-level experts over. As the City of Basil had McKenzie, the Radiant Church wouldn't dare to act too wildly.

"Big brother Ley."

A surprised and happy voice rang out from the doorway. Linley turned his head and saw Jenne, her face flushed, rush in wearing a faint red dress. Her chest was rising and falling, and she was panting. As soon as she heard the news that Linley was back, Jenne had immediately ran over as fast as she could.

"Why'd you run so fast? Look at how out of breath you are. Have a seat." Linley laughed.

"Okay." Jenne very obediently sat down.

After a while, Keane and Lambert entered as well. Laughing, Keane complained, "Sis, you ran too fast. I couldn't even keep up with you."

Jenne was a bit embarrassed. She shot a vicious glare at Keane.

"Big brother Ley, it's been a long time since you last came. How long do you plan to stay this time?" Keane asked Linley.

Linley shook his head. "This time, I've come to bid you farewell. I plan to leave the prefectural city of Cerre."

"What?"

Keane and Lambert were both startled. Simultaneously, they turned their heads to look at Jenne. Where before, her face had been flushed with excitement and shyness, a stunned look was now on Jenne's face.

"Big brother Ley, where are you going?" Jenne was the first to ask.

"For now, I plan to go to the provincial capital of Basil," Linley replied.

The provincial capital of Basil and the prefectural city of Cerre were fairly far apart. Normal people would need to spend two or three days by carriage to get there.

"Big brother Ley, I'll go with you," Jenne summoned her courage and said.

Linley sighed to himself. How could he not know what Jenne was thinking?

But towards Jenne, Linley felt nothing more than the love he would feel towards a younger sister. This was a familial, platonic love.

“Enough, Jenne. I’m going on business. I might encounter danger. There’s no need for you to follow me.” Linley refused.

Jenne shook her head resolutely. “I’m not afraid.”

Looking at Jenne, Linley knew that if he didn’t refuse her very openly and firmly, she wouldn’t give up. Linley let out a long sigh. “Jenne, all I care about is training. Nothing else. Jenne, there’s no way I can take care of you.”

Linley spoke with tact, but how could Jenne not understand his meaning?

Jenne’s face was somewhat pale. Since she had been eight years old, she had lived in that countryside village. The life she had lived there was both peaceful as well as harsh. On this trip to the prefectural city of Cerre, Linley had protected them the entire time, which was the only reason her and her brother had survived the trip and took over the governorship.

“Big brother Ley, I don’t want to continue repressing my feelings. Big brother Ley, I know you don’t like me that way. I don’t want to ask too much. All I want to do is to ask that you allow me to accompany you. Big brother Ley, I’m willing to be your maidservant. As long as I can be by your side, I’ll be happy,” Jenne said hopefully.

Keane and Lambert were both silent.

Linley felt extremely anxious as well. Jenne really was an extremely kind girl, but...

“Jenne, there’s no need for you to follow me and expose yourself to danger. Right now, you are a noble lady. In the prefectural city of Cerre, there are definitely many outstanding young men who are pursuing you,” Linley said.

Jenne bit her lips, then resolutely shook her head. Her eyes were growing moist.

“Big brother Ley,” Keane said. “Please agree to my sister’s request. These past days when you haven’t been around, she’s had almost no appetite. She’s grown thinner now.”

Her eyes moist, Jenne looked at Linley with an appeal in her eyes.

“Jenne...”

In the end, Linley’s heart softened. “Five years. I will give you five years, and you give me five years as well. Five years from now, I’ll come meet you. If at that time you are still resolute in your decision, I’ll agree to let you accompany me.”

Time was the best medicine.

Five years from now, Jenne would have matured and her thoughts and beliefs would have changed as well. Linley believed that perhaps because Jenne didn’t have parents to take care of her when she was young, she had come to depend on and love him. In a few more years, when Jenne grew more mature, her mind would change. By then, Linley wouldn’t be under any pressure.

“Five years. Okay.” Hope appeared once more in Jenne’s eyes.

“Jenne.”

Linley looked at Jenne. “Before I go, I need to tell you something. My real name isn’t ‘Ley’. It is Linley Baruch.”

“Linley Baruch?” Jenne murmured.

“Linley? Lord Ley, you are that genius master sculptor?” Lambert cried out in surprise. Lambert had previously stayed in the Holy Union. In the Holy Union, Linley was extremely famous.

“I hope you won’t reveal my presence or my whereabouts. Farewell.”

Linley squeezed out a small smile, then turned and immediately strode out of the hall.

As she looked at Linley’s departing back, the tears finally began to fall from Jenne’s eyes. She balled her fists tightly, her nails piercing into her palm’s flesh.

On the streets of the prefectural city of Cerre.

Rebecca and Leena were seated on the Blackcloud Panther, Haeru. Bebe was comfortably resting in Leena’s arms, while Linley, dressed in his warrior’s outfit, was walking alongside Zassler, who was in a long magus robe.

They were travelling towards the provincial capital of Basil at high speed.

The provincial capital of Basil was a huge city that could be seen from far away.

And just like that, Linley's squad drew close to and entered the provincial capital of Basil.

"No need to rush out and find that Perry right away. Let's find a place to stay first," Linley said.

Zassler nodded as well.

There were definitely quite a few people named Perry in the provincial capital. Most likely, finding the right one would take some time. Thus, Linley and Zassler went to a hotel and reserved an individual, stand-alone manor, where their party now stayed.

Two days after Linley's party had arrived at the provincial capital of Basil, the Bluewind Hawks of Count Perry arrived at the Sacred Isle of the Radiant Church.

The Sacred Isle was a lonely place, located outside the Yulan continent.

The entire Sacred Isle was only a few dozen kilometers long. In truth, in the past, this was a secret base for the Radiant Church. Now, it had been directly converted into their main headquarters.

It had a Radiant Temple that was nine floors high.

This Radiant Temple wasn't as huge as the Radiant Temple of Fenlai City, but it, too, had been painstakingly constructed by the Radiant Church, costing a great deal of effort.

On the ninth floor of the Radiant Temple.

Heidens was seated in front of a window. Through the window, he could see the boundless blue ocean waters beyond the island.

Heidens had been in a fairly good mood recently. The squad of experts of the ninth rank he had sent out had already successfully captured the Arch Magus necromancer, Zassler. Two days ago, he had received more excellent news: in the Eighteen Northern Duchies, his forces had made a tremendous discovery – five potential vessels of the eighth rank.

Generally speaking, an ordinary person would be able to train their bodies to the sixth rank. That was the maximum limit.

Some geniuses could reach the seventh rank just by focusing on training their body.

But... in the Eighteen Northern Duchies, the forces of the Radiant Church had discovered five siblings, all exceedingly strong and durable. None of them had any battle-qi. But all of them had reached the eighth rank as warriors, just based on physical strength.

“Vessels of the eighth rank. That will definitely be enough to allow Seraphims, the Six-Winged Angels, to display their power.” Heidens couldn’t help but be excited. “Five bodies of the eighth rank. When the Angels possess them, they will definitely be able to transform into five peak-stage Saint-level combatants.”

Early-stage, middle-stage, and peak-stage Saint-level combatants were on entirely different levels of power.

Currently, the entire Radiant Church only had five peak-stage Saint-level combatants. But once those five specimens of the eighth rank were brought over, the peak-stage Saint-level experts under the Radiant Church would instantly double!

“By then, would the Cult of Shadows still be able to stand against us?” Heidens’ face was covered in smiles.

“Your Holiness.”

“Enter.” Heidens’ face regained its usual calm.

A Vicar walked in, respectfully presenting a letter to the Holy Emperor. “Your Holiness, this is a secret message from our supervisor in the O’Brien Empire’s Northwest Administrative Province.”

“Oh?” Heidens raised an eyebrow.

The supervisors in the outside areas, aside from their annual reports, would almost never send secret messages. If a secret message was sent out, then it meant that something major has occurred.

“Could it be that...?” Heidens suddenly remembered that not too long ago,



Lampson and his men had just escorted that Arch Magus necromancer into the Northwest Administrative Province.

Heidens immediately accepted the letter, opening the envelope.

As soon as he saw its contents, Heidens' face sank down. "Have Lord Stehle come see me."

"Lord Stehle?" The Vicar was surprised.

In the Radiant Church, the leader of the Ascetics was Lord Fallen Leaf. As for the Special Executors of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal, their leader was Lord Stehle.

Lord Stehle was only a Special Executor.

But in terms of power, he was on par with the leader of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal, Praetor Osenno. Both were peak-stage Saint-level combatants. In times of peace, the Radiant Church rarely sent peak-stage Saint-level combatants out on missions.

"Hurry," Heidens barked.

The Vicar immediately came to his senses and hurriedly said, "Yes, Your Holiness."

Watching the Vicar depart, Heidens began to frown. "So it seems Lampson's squad had arrived half a month ago in the Northwest Administrative Province. But there has been no news from our borders informing me of their return to the Holy Union. It seems... they really have been killed."

Lampson and ten other experts of the ninth rank had all died.

This setback was not a small one, but Heidens was able to maintain his calm.

After all, what the Radiant Church truly relied on was Saint-level combatants. As long as their Saint-level combatants remained, the Radiant Church wouldn't be threatened at its core.

"Lampson and the other five were escorting Zassler. Given their ability, one or two combatants of the ninth rank wouldn't be able to deal with them." Heidens frowned. "Could it have been a Saint-level combatant? The McKenzie of the Northwest Administrative Province?"

Heidens couldn't think of any other possibilities besides McKenzie.

"McKenzie!" Heidens was filled with a murderous intent.

To Heidens, those eleven combatants of the ninth rank put together weren't as valuable as a single Zassler. Zassler's true value lay not in the man himself, but rather in the training method for Necromantic Magic. As a type of magic on par with Oracular Magic, it was naturally extremely powerful.

It included maledictive spells, poison gases, plague spells, undead slaves, and the Wraith Call ability. These were all extremely powerful.

The Radiant Church didn't reject necromancers from their ranks.

So long as a necromancer was willing to serve them, they would absolutely be willing to give this necromancer the title of Special Executor. The dark underbelly of the Radiant Church that was the Ecclesiastical Tribunal possessed experts of all types and places.

Heidens didn't know that the person who had killed Lampson and his men was Linley. If he had known, Heidens would probably be so angry that he would jump up and down.

"Your Holiness," an ice-cold voice rang out.

"Stehle. Come in," Heidens said warmly.

Stehle was only 1.7 meters tall. In the Yulan continent, he would be considered a fairly small and skinny person. He had short white hair, and his eyes were as sharp as knife blades. Judging from his appearance, he seemed to be a middle-aged man.

"Your Holiness, is there something you need?" Stehle asked directly.

Heidens was very direct as well. "According to our reports, Lampson and his men are most likely dead. There is a high chance that the killer is a Saint-level combatant of the O'Brien Empire."

Stehle remained silent.

"I am going to send you to the North Sea Administrative Province of the O'Brien Empire. When you get there, you will meet with another group that is escorting a number of prisoners. No matter what happens, you must ensure

that those five siblings are brought back to the Sacred Isle.”

“And if I encounter Saint-level combatants of the O’Brien Empire?” Stehle asked.

“Kill them, and then fly back with those five at maximum speed,” Heidens said emotionlessly.

Once they used those five bodies of the eighth rank as vessels for Angels to descend into, the Radiant Church would have produced five peak-stage Saint-level combatants. For the sake of that, it would be worth it if they had to offend the O’Brien Empire. After all, even if they offended the O’Brien Empire, at worst, the Holy Empire would just have to give the O’Brien Empire some sort of compensation.

“Alright. I immediately will head out tonight, at nightfall,” Stehle said indifferently.

## Concealed by the Night

There had been no trace of Linley in over three years. It was impossible for Heidens to connect this affair with Linley. What's more, even if he did think of Linley, he wouldn't think that Linley had the ability to kill six experts of the ninth rank.

Unfortunately...

Heidens didn't know that Linley had grown, grown at a speed even faster than he had feared.

Within a secluded restaurant in the provincial capital of Basil.

Linley was seated by himself, with Bebe being his only companion. They were casually drinking.

"Come over here," Linley called to the waiter.

"Is there something you need, sir?" That waiter was extremely courteous.

Linley casually tossed out three gold pieces. "Let me ask you a question. If I'm satisfied with your answer, these three gold pieces are yours." This waiter's yearly salary was only around four gold pieces. His eyes immediately lit up with greed.

"Sir, please ask. I know quite a few things in this province," the servant said confidently.

In a place like this restaurant, all sorts of people would come and visit. The servant would overhear a great deal and know a great deal as well.

"I want to ask you, is there an old man named 'Perry' within this City of Basil? His hair is white, and he should appear rather dignified," Linley whispered into the waiter's ears.

The waiter immediately let out a confident laugh, and then, very

conscientiously, lowered his voice in response. “You must be referring to Count Perry.”

“Count Perry?”

Linley’s eyes lit up.

The waiter nodded. “In the provincial capital of Basil, there’s only one noble named Perry who is fairly well known. And this Perry is, indeed, an old man, so old that his hair is white. There’s no mistaking it.”

“Oh.” Linley nodded. “Do you know where Count Perry’s manor is?”

The servant nodded. “Of course. Count Perry lives on Huating Road, the third residence from the right.”

“If you come with me, I’ll add another three gold coins,” Linley said.

After all, Linley was worried that he might get lost by himself. It was better to bring the servant with him. This way, at least he wouldn’t get totally lost.

Watching Linley bring out another three gold coins, the servant immediately grew excited. “Alright. Sir, please wait a bit. I’ll go talk to the boss first.”

If he didn’t do anything that day, at worst he would be deducted a day’s pay. But by following Linley, he would be paid three gold coins.

The provincial capital of Basil. Huating Road.

Linley stared from afar at an ancient looking manor. Judging from the decaying, ivy-wrapped walls, this manor was at least several centuries old.

“Count Perry, a very kind fellow?”

Linley sneered.

This ‘very kind fellow’ the waiter described was the supervisor of affairs for the Radiant Church in the Northwest Administrative Province. The O’Brien Empire was extremely antagonistic towards foreign religions. If Perry were to be discovered, he would definitely be found guilty of a serious crime, to be punished by having his belongings confiscated and his clan wiped out.

Memorizing the address, Linley immediately turned and left.

But what Linley didn’t notice was a man staring at him in astonishment from a

distance. “Here? He actually showed up here?” The man was amazed.

“Mm. It’s been three years. I didn’t expect to discover him here. It looks like I’ll receive that reward of five thousand gold coins.” The man was very delighted.

Walking on the streets, Linley did not notice any of the ordinary commoners who weren’t particularly strong. Naturally, he wouldn’t have paid any attention to this ordinary warrior who was only of the third rank.

Within the courtyard of the residence behind his hotel.

Zassler was seated beneath a large tree in the courtyard. Seeing Linley enter, he laughed. “How did it go? Did you find that Perry fellow?”

“Found him. He’s even a Count. His position isn’t that low,” Linley said.

Someone capable of becoming the supervisor of affairs for a province definitely wasn’t an incapable person. He would either be a wealthy magnate or a powerful noble.

“Haha, wonderful. Then tonight, let us... pay a visit.” Zassler’s laughed sinisterly, his eyes emitting a hint of green light.

Linley nodded calmly.

“Rebecca, Leena.” Linley raised his head to look at the two twins who had just walked in from the main hall. “Tonight, the two of you need to stay here. Don’t go anywhere.”

“Understood.” Rebecca and Leena both nodded.

Zassler laughed in the direction of the twins. “Do as I have taught you, and enter the meditative trance. In a few days, I will begin to commence the ‘Necromantic Initiation Rites’ for both of you.”

After having been with them for a period of time, Zassler had made the determination that these two twins were highly suited for studying Necromantic Magic.

In truth, the normal seven elements of magic (earth, fire, water, wind, lightning, light, darkness) all had fairly high requirements with regards to spiritual energy. But the higher-level arts of Oracular Magic, Life Magic, and

Necromantic Magic, had terrifyingly high requirements when it came to souls.

Of these three types of magic, Necromantic Magic had the highest requirements with regards to spiritual purity and soul analysis. Comparatively speaking, it didn't have much of a requirement with regards to elemental essence affinity.

“Necromantic Initiation Rites?”

Rebecca and Leena were both excited. This entire time, they had hoped they would be able to seek revenge for their parents, but they didn't have any power. But after learning Necromantic Magic, they would have sufficient power.

That night.

“Haeru. Protect Rebecca and Leena,” Linley instructed.

To deal with a minor figure like Perry was an extremely simple task. Linley and Zassler would be more than enough. With Bebe present as well, there would be no chance of failure at all.

“Be careful,” Rebecca and Leena said.

Zassler laughed weirdly. “In Basil, aside from McKenzie, there's no one whom I or Linley need to be concerned with.”

“Let's go,” Linley said calmly.

Both dressed in black, Linley and Zassler very quickly slipped out of the courtyard. The black-furred Bebe also stealthily followed the two, with none the wiser.

In the dark night, Linley, Zassler, and Bebe were walking in an alleyway.

“Huating Road must be ahead.” Linley's memory was very good. Despite having a very complicated layout, Linley was able to thoroughly memorize the layout after having walked through the city once. Linley, Zassler, and Bebe directly passed through the small alleyway and arrived at the outskirts of the walls to Count Perry's manor.

Staring at this ancient building, Zassler and Linley exchanged glances.

“Zassler, you need to be certain.” Linley had never seen Count Perry before.

“Don’t worry.” Zassler’s lips curled in a dark smile.

Linley led Zassler forward as they jumped directly past the wall. With regards to how residences were generally laid out, Linley and Zassler both had a good general idea. Usually in front was the main hall, while the second building in the back was where the owner would sleep.

But Zassler came to a stop in front of the second building as he began to mumble a magical incantation.

A short while later...

Grey smoke began to slowly drift towards the building. In a short while, the entire second building was covered by that grey fog. The fog continued to spread until it covered every single building in the residence. Watching this happen, Linley was puzzled.

Linley took a sniff of the grey fog. As he did, he felt momentarily dizzy, but then instantly recovered.

“What are you doing?” Linley asked softly.

“I’m just putting the weaker people here to sleep. Upon reaching the seventh rank, a person can use battle-qi to counteract this fog. Perry is a warrior of the eighth rank.” Zassler knew exactly how strong Perry was.

“Who is it?!”

An angry roar could be heard, as an old man and three middle-aged men ran out from the room. The leader stared icily at Linley and Zassler. But because of the grey mist, as well as the fact that it was late at night, they could not make out Linley or Zassler’s appearance.

“Lord Count.” Three more voices rang out from the courtyard, as two more middle-aged men and a young man ran over.

The Count had seven experts at his residence; five of the seventh rank, two of the eighth rank.

“Who are you?” Count Perry barked.



“Heh heh heh. Oh, Perry. You’ve forgotten me?” Zassler slowly walked forward, while two powerful, golden-furred zombies materialized out of nowhere.

The mist began to thin, and Count Perry could now see him clearly.

“It’s you.” Count Perry’s eyes bulged from their sockets. He knew exactly how powerful Zassler was. Even five or six experts of the ninth rank wouldn’t be able to do anything to him.

Seeing Zassler appear, Perry understood that most likely, Lampson and his men had indeed met a violent end.

“And you are?” Count Perry looked at Linley. Suddenly, he started.

Linley’s appearance had long ago been distributed to every single one of the Radiant Church’s supervisors in foreign locations. Compared to three years ago, Linley’s hair was now a bit longer, yes, but his face hadn’t changed much.

“You are Linley?” Perry was somewhat shocked.

Linley smiled and nodded. “Count Perry, good eyesight. Zassler and I have quite a few things we’d like to discuss with you on this lovely night. Zassler, let’s move.”

“Kill,” Zassler immediately barked.

The two golden-furred zombies suddenly transformed into rays of golden light, charging at those other six men. Sudden screams of agony could be heard, as the zombies killed three of them in a blink of an eye, causing the other three to turn pale with fear.

“Clang.” That young man chopped down on the body of the golden-furred zombie with his sabre, but the only effect was that his hand broke from the impact. Golden-furred zombies prided themselves on their defensive abilities.

“Groooooowl.” With a low growl, the golden-furred zombie caved the young man’s head in with a single blow.

“Bang!”

A middle-aged man kicked viciously at a nearby boulder, sending enormous pieces of rock smashing towards the golden-furred zombie. But the zombie only

charged at him, fast as lightning. Those pieces of rocks continued to fly at high speed towards the zombie. “Bang!” “Bang!” “Bang!” One rock after another smashed against the golden-furred zombie, and it didn’t block at all.

Each rock contained thousands of pounds of force, but unfortunately, they did nothing to the golden-furred zombies.

“Slash.”

A black blur flashed by, and that middle-aged man fell to the floor in astonishment.

“You’re too slow, you big oaf.” Bebe growled towards the golden-furred zombie, then jumped back onto Linley’s shoulders.

The golden-furred zombie’s speed could be considered the speed of a normal combatant of the ninth rank. But compared to Bebe, there was a huge difference. After all, Bebe and Haeru were magical beasts of the ninth rank that specialized in speed.

The six of them had been killed by the two golden-furred zombies and Bebe in the blink of an eye. Those zombies were, after all, undead of the ninth rank. Those people didn’t have a chance against them.

Perry had silently maintained his composure the entire time.

When he had been selected as the supervisor for this region by the Radiant Church, he had mentally prepared for such a day. Only, what he had expected was that he would be killed by the O’Brien Empire’s men. He didn’t expect that it would be Linley and Zassler who killed him.

“Linley, it was you who killed Lampson’s men and rescued Zassler?” Perry questioned. Before dying, Perry wanted to indulge his curiosity.

“Indeed,” Linley replied succinctly.

Perry nodded and laughed. “You truly do live up to the name of being one of the descendants of the Dragonblood Warrior clan. In three years, your power has grown so much. I hope you don’t expect to get anything out of me, however. I won’t answer your questions.” A hint of a holy light had appeared on Perry’s face.

“Do you think that will do you any good?” Zassler sneered.

“Seize him,” Zassler ordered coldly.

The two golden-furred zombies charged at Perry at high speed, seizing him without giving him a chance to avoid.

“Linley, help me stay on watch for a while. I am about to ‘Soulscur’ him,” Zassler instructed Linley.

Linley started.

Soulscur? Linley had never heard of anyone being able to ‘Soulscur’ someone. Even the Radiant Church didn’t have the ability to search and scour a person’s soul. But necromancers, as practitioners of the type of magic that involved souls the most, naturally knew far more about souls than all other types of magi.

“Soulscur?” Hearing this word, Perry was shocked as well. “Impossible.” He had never heard of a ‘Soulscur’ technique.

“Haha. Even if you were to die right now, it would be too late.”

Zassler walked in front of Perry. The five fingers of his wizened, chicken-claw-like hand grabbed Perry’s head, while at the same time, Zassler’s eyes suddenly turned a deep green color.

“Uhhhh... ahhhhh...” Perry’s body began to tremble violently, while at the same time, he began to let out agonized moans.

## The Decision

Although Perry was already over two hundred years old, as a warrior of the eighth rank, his body was still very sturdy. But after Zassler pierced his claws into his skull, Perry's face and body began to turn ashen white, while at the same time, his body began to quiver violently, as though he were an extremely ill old man.

Linley carefully watched this sight.

"Soulscur." This was the first time Linley had seen this sort of technique performed. As one of the three most powerful types of magi, necromancers did indeed have some terrifying abilities.

After approximately two minutes had passed, Zassler's green, glowing eyes returned to their normal color.

Zassler glanced at the ashen faced Perry, letting out a sinister laugh, then released him. The two golden-furred zombies also released Perry. As for Perry, with his skull pierced by claws and his soul scoured, he was dead without a doubt. Like a pile of mud, he slumped to the floor and didn't move again.

"What do you think?" Zassler looked delightedly at Linley.

An expert like Zassler generally wouldn't feel pride upon seeing the astonishment and admiration of ordinary people. But during this period of time that he had spent with Linley, he had yet to do anything to make Linley truly admire him. After revealing this ability, Zassler was quite looking forward to seeing Linley's amazed expression.

Only the amazement of experts could satisfy Zassler's vanity.

"Very incredible." Linley sighed in honest amazement.

Souls were very amazing, mysterious things. They were the most fundamental component of a person, but people knew very little about souls. To recover a

person's memory from his soul was something that Linley, at least, couldn't even begin to imagine doing.

"Heh heh heh." Zassler laughed delightedly, and then those two golden-furred zombies by his side disappeared, returning to their home in the undead realm.

"Let's go," Linley urged.

In the blink of an eye, Count Perry's manor returned to its normal calm. By now, most people here remained unconscious, while the corpses of the experts just lay there on the floor.

Within the private courtyard of their residence.

Shutting the door to the main hall, Rebecca and Leena very obediently lit the lamps as Linley and Zassler began to chat.

"What did you discover in Perry's memories?" Linley asked calmly.

Zassler laughed delightedly as he looked at Linley. "Linley, in the past, I knew too little about you. I didn't expect that you were such an incredible figure."

"What did you find out about big brother Ley?" Rebecca's adorable, large eyes widened as she asked with curiosity.

Zassler laughed, his white eyebrows jumping up and down. "Rebecca, Leena, your big brother Linley has quite a reputation in the Holy Union. His proficiency in stone sculpting is nearly on the same level as the likes of grandmasters such as Proulx. Do you know? When he was sixteen years old, he carved out a special sculpture. Can you guess how much that sculpture was worth?" Zassler asked, laughing.

"Sculpture?"

Rebecca and Leena glanced at each other.

To them, sculptures were things that were very hard to make. To carve out a sculpture that was accurate and detailed was already hard enough, to say nothing of making it have a special aura.

"How many gold coins?" Rebecca and Leena asked curiously.

“Ten million gold coins!” Zassler announced.

Zassler had actually gotten all of this information from Count Perry’s mind. Count Perry had received a ‘kill order’ from the Radiant Church regarding Linley. Naturally, this kill order had many details regarding Linley.

“Ten million gold coins, for just a statue?” Rebecca and Leena’s mouths hung open, very wide.

“Not just sculptures, by the way. Your big brother Linley’s talent as a magus, in the past, was the second best in history. But now, most likely in the entire history of the Yulan continent, he can be considered the number one genius. As for his talent as a warrior, you should already know.” Zassler sincerely admired Linley from the heart.

Genius.

Nobody would question that he was a genius. Linley’s performance had given testament to everything.

Rebecca and Leena immediately looked towards Linley, their eyes filled with astonishment and worship.

“Enough, Zassler.” Linley shook his head and laughed. “Enough of these bygone affairs. Tell me what you found in Perry’s mind.”

Zassler nodded, dropping his smile.

“Based on the information in Perry’s memory, the Radiant Church’s forces in the O’Brien Empire are fairly weak. They are all in hiding. They don’t dare to offend the War God, and thus in the O’Brien Empire, the Radiant Church has very few experts.”

Linley nodded slightly.

“From Perry’s memories, I discovered the identities of the various supervisors throughout the Northwest Administrative Province for the Radiant Church. We now can definitely shatter their entire web of power in this area.” Zassler laughed evilly.

Creation was hard. Destruction was easy.

To place a group of people in an area without arousing suspicion was

extremely hard.

But to destroy this web of influence only required those people be killed.

“And in the other provinces?” Linley asked.

As far as Linley was concerned, just destroying their web of influence in this administrative province wasn’t enough. Only by destroying the entire operation of the Radiant Church in the O’Brien Empire would Linley be truly happy.

“If we kill all of the general supervisors and some of the important supervisors in all seven provinces, the Radiant Church’s forces will be like a beheaded dragon. In addition, the Radiant Church’s force structure in these areas all hinge around a single line of communication. Once the general supervisor and supervisors are dead, most likely their entire web of influence will collapse.”

The greater the blow to the Radiant Church, the happier Linley would be.

Zassler shook his head. “Just like how each supervisor in each prefectural city only reports to Perry, Perry himself only reports to the general supervisor for the entire O’Brien Empire, or the Radiant Church’s headquarters.”

“The general supervisor for the entire O’Brien Empire?” Linley’s eyes lit up.

So in the O’Brien Empire, there was a highly ranked general supervisor for the Empire? If they could seize this person and Soulscour him, most likely they would learn even more.

“Sadly, even Perry didn’t know who this person really is.” Zassler shook his head. “Perry only knew about a place he could go to exchange messages.”

Linley nodded.

But Zassler suddenly began to laugh. “But from Perry’s memories, I discovered another piece of interesting news.”

“Speak.” Linley looked at Zassler.

“The general supervisor of the O’Brien Empire issued an order. In roughly another month’s time, another squad of prisoner escorts will enter the Northwest Administrative Province. The general supervisor ordered Perry to carefully assist and welcome these people and make sure their secrets were kept.” Zassler’s lips split into a grin. “Per this order, it seems as though they

place a very high importance on this squad. This squad isn't the slightest bit less important than the one escorting me."

"Oh?" Linley's eyes lit up.

For this squad's importance to be so high meant that the people they were escorting definitely weren't ordinary figures.

"Do you know where their first point of entry in the Northwest Administrative Province will be?" Linley asked.

"It should be the prefectural city of Deco. Based on the initial planned trajectory, they won't pass through the provincial capital," Zassler said.

Linley nodded. He could totally understand this. The provincial capital of Basil had the Saint-level expert McKenzie present. Naturally, their route had to avoid this place.

"The prefectural city of Deco is roughly eight hundred kilometers away." Zassler was quite familiar with the geography of the O'Brien Empire.

Linley said coldly, "Eight hundred kilometers? If we rush, we can get there in a day."

If the Blackcloud Panther, Haeru, were to run at maximum speed, he wouldn't even need half a day. But running for so long meant that he wouldn't be able to maintain maximum output the entire time.

But if they ran at normal speeds and left in the morning, they definitely could reach there by nightfall.

"In half a month, we will head towards the prefectural city of Deco," Linley said.

Zassler nodded as well.

Time passed. Linley, Zassler, and the sisters remained within this residence. Zassler was preparing to begin the 'Necromantic Initiation Rites' for the two sisters, while Linley didn't waste any time either as he trained continuously.

Linley didn't actually have the opportunity to witness the 'Necromantic Initiation Rites' first hand.



Only Rebecca, Leena, and Zassler were inside their room, as they began the 'Necromantic Initiation Rites'. Very shortly afterwards, Zassler left the room, then instructed Linley not to disturb the two.

A full three days and three nights later, Rebecca and Leena proudly left the room.

Over the course of those three days, they had been totally attuned with the contents of the 'Necromantic Initiation Rites'. According to what Zassler said, these two sisters had very high aptitudes.

As for Linley, he continued to train in the fourth level of the heavy sword, the 'Profound Truths of the Earth'.

In the desolate wildness, a long-robed figure crossed the boundless plains like a whirlwind, flying east at high speed.

He had a skinny, agile frame, and his short hair was gleaming silver, looking like steel threads.

His entire body was covered by a black robe, and his eyes were very sharp. He stared east as he flew through the air at high speed.

"Five vessels of the eighth rank." Stehle still remembered Heidens' repeated instructions.

Those five siblings that were under armed escort could not be allowed to escape, no matter what. Five bodies of the eighth rank! Once the Angels descended, they would transform into five peak-stage Saint-level combatants.

"It has been a long time since I've killed a Saint-level combatant." Stehle's face had a hint of a cold, sinister smile on it.

Heidens had already stated that if a Saint-level combatant were to interfere, he could kill them. The Radiant Church would bear all responsibility for his actions.

The tenth morning after Count Perry's death.

Linley was seated cross-legged on the floor, not moving at all. The morning mist covered the lands. Recently, Linley's life had been very peaceful, even though Perry's death had aroused an investigation by the city guards.

But this had nothing to do with Linley and his group.

Linley suddenly rose to his feet. The adamantine heavy sword in his hands suddenly stabbed forward, and an ear-splitting howl could be heard!

A wall roughly fifty meters in front of Linley suddenly quivered, a layer of dust shaking off from it.

“Boooom.” A fist-sized chunk of wall suddenly turned into dust. The sand-like pieces of disintegrated stone slowly poured out, revealing that fist-sized hole in the wall.

No battle-qi had been shot out. Just by stabbing at the air, Linley had created a hole in the wall at fifty meters distance.

“Profound Truths of the Earth – Triple Layered Waves.”

Linley gently murmured, “These most basic ‘Triple Layered Waves’ of the Profound Truths of the Earth have finally been completed.” After leaving the prefectural city of Cerre, Linley had been pondering this the entire time.

And now, Linley had finally mastered the most basic attack of the ‘Profound Truths of the Earth’: the ‘Triple Layered Waves’.

When the force of the battle-qi and physical strength in an attack were converted into vibrational form, the more vibrations that were created represented a higher rate of conversion, with lower loss of power. The ‘Triple Layered Waves’ technique had a very high level of loss conversion, but it was already extremely powerful.

After all, it was a totally different form of attack than one utilizing battle-qi and physical force.

“Linley.” Zassler was standing at the doorway, watching. “What sort of attack is that?” Zassler was quite surprised as well.

Zassler had seen attacks from Saint-level combatants.

But generally, what they did was chop out their swords, projecting battle-qi in distant attacks. But Zassler had never seen someone like Linley, who, without visibly using battle-qi or any other power, could suddenly, silently, create a fist-sized hole in a distant wall. This was too bizarre.

“Even if I told you, you wouldn’t understand.” Linley laughed calmly.

After having mastered the most basic ‘Triple Layered Waves’, Linley knew that the farther up he went, the more difficult it would be and the more time would be required.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

Suddenly, knocking sounds could be heard from outside the door. Linley immediately walked over and opened it.

The hotel attendant said respectfully, “Sir, this gentleman wants to meet you.” An amiable, middle-aged man was standing next to the attendant.

The middle-aged man glanced at the attendant, and the attendant very courteously withdrew immediately.

The middle-aged man smiled at Linley. “Lord Linley, hello.”

Linley’s face couldn’t help but change. There were very few people who knew his identity.

“Lord Linley, no need to be too anxious. My clan’s lord wishes to meet with you.” The middle-aged man smiled.

“Who is the lord of your clan?” Linley frowned.

“Lord Linley, if you read this letter, you will understand.” The middle-aged man withdrew a letter from his clothes and offered it to Linley.

## The Four Bros' Paths

Zassler walked out from the back as well. Hearing the middle-aged man address Linley by his name, he immediately grew wary. But after he reached Linley's side, he saw that upon reading the letter, a smile appeared on Linley's face. A very happy smile.

Zassler could tell that although Linley wasn't a sinister fellow, he was rather callous, focused utterly on training.

He had never seen Linley smile in such a happy, brilliant manner.

"Zassler." Linley laughed. "You stay here for now. I need to meet a friend."

"Sure." Zassler nodded.

"Bebe," Linley shouted towards Bebe, who was sleeping on the ground. Bebe opened his bleary eyes, staring questioningly at Linley.

"Come, make a trip with me."

"Haeru, you can stay here."

Bebe delightedly raised his head up at Haeru arrogantly, then scampered onto Linley's shoulders. Happily, he mentally spoke to Linley. "Boss, what are we going to do?"

"You'll know when we get there." Linley laughed.

"Lead the way," Linley said to the middle-aged man.

Within fifteen minutes, Linley and the middle-aged man reached a large, lavish mansion. From far away, Linley could recognize the figure standing in the middle of the main hall.

"Third Bro!" that familiar voice called out excitedly.

"Boss Yale." Linley was laughing as well.

“Squeeaaaak!” Bebe squeaked out delightedly as well. When they were at the Ernst Institute, Bebe had gotten along very well with Yale, Reynolds, and George as well. Naturally, they were quite familiar with each other.

Yale had matured quite a bit compared to three years ago. Right now, Yale was roughly as tall as Linley, nearly two meters tall. But Yale was slightly thinner than Linley, making him appear like a tall, skinny man.

That form-fitting black gentleman’s suit, combined with a faint cologne, made Yale seem to have a very magnetic charisma.

“Third Bro, I’ve been worried to death over these past three years.” Yale bear-hugged Linley.

Hugging his dear friend, Linley felt very happy as well.

In the past three years, he hadn’t seen his dear friends a single time.

“I didn’t expect that you would grow to be about as tall as me. These three years really have changed you.” Yale sighed. Compared to three years ago, Yale didn’t change that much, but Linley had.

Linley laughed loudly. “You were a year older than me to begin with. You just had a head start. Now that you are no longer growing, it’s very normal that I caught up.”

Bebe squeaked off from the side.

Bebe was very happy as well. It had been a long time since Bebe had seen Linley laughing and joking like this.

“Wow, Bebe!” Yale hugged Bebe, affectionately rubbing his little head. “I knew that you’d come. I’ve prepared some fine foods for you!”

Yale turned his head and glanced at the attendant, who understood what Yale desired. Shortly afterwards, more than ten attendants pushed carts laden with food over.

“This is roasted meat delicacies from around the world. Bebe, have a taste.” Yale laughed loudly.

Bebe’s little nose sniffed the air, then his eyes immediately began to shine. Transforming into a black shadow, he charged towards those food carts.

Watching this, Linley and Yale both began to laugh.

“Boss Yale, let’s chat inside,” Linley said with a laugh.

The two bros entered the main hall, which had been covered with all sorts of delicacies and fine wines. The two bros began to eat and chat.

“Right, Yale, what happened to the Ernst Institute?” Linley suddenly asked.

“It’s finished.” Yale shook his head and sighed. “The Ernst Institute was very close to Fenlai City and came under heavy attack by the magical beasts. You know, even the instructors in the Institute were only of the eighth rank at most. Most of the students were very weak. Facing all those magical beasts... how could they resist them?”

Linley nodded.

Students of the sixth year, the highest year, were just magi of the sixth rank. But the magical beasts possessed quite a few beasts of the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth ranks. When a large number of magical beasts charged over, it really was a disaster.

“There is no longer an Ernst Institute in the world.”

Yale sighed. “I, Reynolds, and George left the Holy Union three years ago. These three years, I’ve been running around between the O’Brien Empire and the Yulan Empire. As for Reynolds, naturally he returned to his clan, while George returned to the Yulan Empire as well. I hear that George has done quite well for himself. He’s managed to enter the imperial government of the Yulan Empire.”

“Entered the imperial government?”

Linley wasn’t too shocked. George was, after all, a very good person at organization, and behind George was the mighty Walsh clan. Success wouldn’t be too hard for him.

“And Fourth Bro?” Linley laughed as he asked.

“Fourth Bro? He returned to his own clan and was delivered to the army by his father.” Yale laughed loudly. “Third Bro, just imagine. Fourth Bro in the army. Isn’t that unbelievable?”

Linley began to laugh as well.

Their Fourth Bro, Reynolds, was a very lively and rebellious person. But now, he was entering the army? One could imagine how miserable he was there.

“But last year, when I saw Fourth Bro, he seemed to have changed quite a bit. He’s much more mature than before, and he does indeed look like a soldier now. But as soon as he started to drink with me, he returned to his old self.” Yale roared with laughter.

“Boss Yale, what about yourself? I feel that compared to before, you have even more of a nobleman’s aura than in the past.”

Indeed. Dressed in that black gentleman’s suit, Yale’s nobleman’s aura could be clearly sensed by anyone.

“Nothing for it.” Yale laughed bitterly. “After leaving the Ernst Institute, aside from normal magical training, I’ve been focused on managing some of my clan’s affairs. Naturally, I had to sit through countless noble banquets. After so long, I’ve learned some of their mannerisms.”

Linley nodded.

His three dear bros had all embarked on a path that belonged to them.

Government. Military. Market.

“And what about myself?” In his mind, Linley knew exactly what his path was. “Advance on the path of training until I reach the level of the High Priest, the War God, and Dylin. Stand at the very peak of the Yulan continent!”

The absolute peak-level experts possessed all the true power in this world.

To a Deity-level combatant, everything was but a joke. No one dared to offend a Deity-level combatant. They were the ultimate forces in existence in the Yulan continent.

Linley wouldn’t permit any obstacles to prevent him from advancing on this path.

Nothing would stop him!

“Third Bro, three years ago, when I went to the imperial capital, I saw your

little brother,” Yale suddenly said.

“Wharton?” Linley’s eyes lit up.

Yale nodded with a laugh. “When I saw Wharton, he was very worried about you, since he didn’t know what your situation was. I told him you were fine, and that you were just training by yourself.”

“How is Wharton doing?” Linley asked.

“Don’t worry, he’s doing very well,” Yale said with surprise, “I didn’t expect that your little brother was even more muscular than you. Three years ago, he was already a bit taller than me. By now, he should be even taller. Those arms, those muscles. Damn!”

Linley laughed while nodding.

Wharton’s growth was completely within his expectations. After all, every single Dragonblood Warrior in the history of his clan was extremely physically muscular. The weapons they used were the likes of the first Dragonblood Warrior’s warblade ‘Slaughterer’, the second one’s heavy pike, or the third one’s heavy warhammer.

“Linley, your little brother, Wharton, really knows how to conceal himself. In the past, he had been hiding his power the entire time. But after knowing about your affairs, your little brother stopped doing so and began to slowly reveal his strength. A while ago, at the annual tournament for the seventh-grade students, he shocked everyone when he defeated a warrior of the eighth rank.” Yale sighed in amazement.

Linley smiled calmly.

A warrior of the eighth rank?

Right now, Wharton was of the seventh rank, and he could also Dragonform. Once Dragonformed, he could reach the ninth rank in power.

“After becoming famous, how has Wharton been doing?” Linley asked.

“Wharton was conferred the rank of Imperial Count. Right now, he’s a rising star in the O’Brien Empire. In a few years, perhaps he will be recruited into the War God’s College.” Yale sighed. “In the future, he has a high chance of entering



the Saint level.”

“War God’s College? Saint-level?” Linley didn’t actually wish for his younger brother to enter the War God’s College.

To the venerable Dragonblood Warriors, entering the Saint level was something that would happen without fail.

Linley chatted with Yale for an entire morning. Linley was now totally at ease, knowing that all of his bros were living good lives.

After lunch.

“Third Bro. This is a talisman of the Dawson Conglomerate. It represents your status as an elder. Take it.” Yale withdrew a black talisman.

Linley was a bit shocked. “An elder?”

When Linley was at the City of Fenlai, he had already displayed the power of an early-stage warrior of the ninth rank. At that time, Linley was only seventeen. Given his natural ability as a magus as well as the fact that he could transform into a Dragonblood Warrior, the elders of the Dawson Conglomerate had come to the conclusion that he would sooner or later enter the Saint level.

Since that was the case, allowing Linley to become an ‘elder’ of the Dawson Conglomerate was definitely a worthy investment.

“Just take it, on account of us being bros.” Yale laughed.

Linley glanced at Yale. He understood that by accepting this talisman, it signified that if in the future, the Dawson Conglomerate ran into any difficulties, he would have to help out. After all, this talisman represented both power and responsibilities.

“Alright. I’ll accept it.” Laughing, Linley took the talisman. Even if he didn’t have this talisman, if the Dawson Conglomerate really ran into any difficulties, for the sake of his dear bro Yale, Linley of course couldn’t just stand by and watch.

“Thanks.”

The two bros were very close. Thus, there were many words that did not need to be said.

“Third Bro. I feel as though your aura, compared to three years ago, is much more restrained. Over the course of these three years, what level of power have you reached?” Yale lowered his voice and whispered the question with curiosity.

Linley didn't hide the truth. “Beneath the Saint level, I should be invincible.”

Yale stared with slight amazement at Linley.

“Enough for now, I have to get back. I'll come visit you in a few days.” Linley laughed.

The North Sea Administrative Province. Within an ordinary little city.

Within a quiet, secluded courtyard.

“Lord Stehle.” A powerfully built warrior called out softly from outside a door. “It's time for us to move.”

A moment later, with a creak, the door swung open. Stehle swept the man with his cold stare. “Then let's move.”

“Yes.” The man didn't even dare to breathe loudly.

Stehle left the courtyard. Only then did the people nearby let out relieved sighs. A glance from a peak-stage Saint-level combatant was enough to make a man's heart quail.

“Quickly,” The man urged immediately.

The other men, escorting those five hugely brawny warriors, began to move as well. Those five huge warriors were 2.2 meters tall, and astonishingly muscular. Only, they were tightly bound by a dark golden rope. No matter how powerful they were, they couldn't break free from these bounds.

Their mouths had been sealed as well.

“Mumble, mumble.”

The five siblings angrily tried to curse.

“Do you want to die?” One of the black-robed guards landed a vicious whip-blow on the body of one of the five siblings, but only left behind a faint white mark. “F\*ck, their bodies are incredibly durable.”

While Stehle's group was busy traversing one city after another in the North Sea Administrative Province, Linley was entrusting Rebecca and Leena into the care of the Dawson Conglomerate's forces in Basil. And then, Linley, Bebe, and Haeru set out in the direction of the prefectural city of Deco.

"The troop escorting the prisoners only have two warriors of the ninth rank. This will be easy." Travelling on Haeru's back, Zassler laughed. "I wonder who this squad is escorting."

"Zassler, the news of Perry's death should have reached the general supervisor of the Church's affairs in the O'Brien Empire by now, right?" Linley suddenly said.

"Yes, he should know by now," Zassler said. "However, they definitely wouldn't be aware that I can Soulscour."

## In Dire Straits

The prefectural city of Deco was a medium-sized city that held a population of three hundred thousand. As one of the cities located at the border between the Northwest Administrative Province and the North Sea Administrative Province, each day there were quite a number of people entering and leaving the city.

“We arrived.”

Seeing the city off in the distance, Linley came to a halt.

This jog, traversing eight hundred kilometers in six hours, didn't tire Linley in the slightest. Actually, it was far, far below Linley's maximum speed. Likewise, for Haeru, the Blackcloud Panther, it was also quite an easy journey.

“We arrived. The sun hasn't even set yet.” Zassler turned his head to look at the sun, still high in the western sky, and let out a sigh.

In Perry's memory, he held the exact location of the arrival, because Perry was planning to personally go to the prefectural city of Deco to welcome the party.

Linley and Zassler took up residence in a manor not too far away from the meeting place.

Having money made so many things easier!

Afterwards, Linley and Zassler began to quietly train, awaiting the arrival of the escort squad, who were going to 'fall into their trap'.

After ten or so days, after having travelled nearly two thousand kilometers on the roads of the North Sea Administrative Province, Stehle's men finally arrived at the borders of the North Sea Administrative Province.

“Giddyup, giddyup!” A man whipped his horse, urging it to go next to Stehle. He said respectfully, “Milord, we've received word that the supervisor for the

Northwest Administrative Province, Count Perry, has been killed. Should we continue on our previously scheduled route?”

Stehle, mounted on horseback, was quiet for a moment, then said calmly, “Count Perry’s faith and loyalty to the Lord is without question. He definitely wouldn’t have betrayed the Lord. Continue on our original route.”

“Yes, milord,” the knight next to him acknowledged respectfully.

The knight actually wasn’t concerned either.

First of all, Count Perry was indeed an extremely ardent adherent to the faith of the Radiant Church. He definitely wouldn’t turn traitor. And secondly, even if they did manage to torture information out of Perry, they would at most ask about some secrets regarding the Radiant Church. They definitely wouldn’t think to ask about the plans of this squad.

In addition, this squad was under the escort of Stehle. What did they have to be afraid of?

By nightfall, Stehle’s squad finally reached the prefectural city of Deco. Long before Perry had died, the Radiant Church’s forces in Deco had already received their orders.

They had been waiting for this squad for a long time.

“Milords, tonight, just rest for a time. Food and drink have already been prepared for you,” The supervisor for the prefectural city of Deco said respectfully.

An expert of the ninth rank asked, “Recently, you haven’t had any problems, have you?”

“None,” the supervisor said respectfully.

“Good. You can leave now. Those attendants, after finishing preparing the food, can leave as well. We don’t need them here,” the expert of the ninth rank said.

“Yes,” the supervisor said respectfully.

Stehle dismounted and headed directly into the residence, in search of a room to stay in. “Seqalu, call me when it is dinner time.” He shut the door.

The combatant of the ninth rank assented respectfully.

Seqalu had been the captain of this squad, but with Stehle's arrival, naturally he would listen to Stehle in all matters. Seqalu closely inspected all of those servants. Seeing that they were all ordinary people, he no longer worried.

"Bring them out," Seqalu ordered.

The five siblings were immediately brought down from the carriage. Fortunately, the carriage was quite spacious, as otherwise, those five enormous siblings wouldn't have been able to sit.

"Listen up, the five of you. If you keep shouting and making noise, the first time you do so, I'll break your arms. The second time, I'll cut off your tongues," Seqalu said coldly.

His subordinates then removed the cloth gags from the mouths of those five siblings.

The five siblings stared angrily at Seqalu, but they knew that Seqalu was the type of person who meant what he said. The five of them didn't plan to be so foolish as to make things harder for themselves.

"Seqalu, there will come a day when we five brothers will kill you," the eldest of the siblings, Barker, said in a cold voice.

Seqalu only let out a chuckle.

Others might not be aware, but he knew... that in the future, these five siblings would have been transformed into vessels for Angels. As for their souls, they would have been destroyed.

"If you have the chance, I'll welcome you to try." Seqalu sneered in response.

The Barker brothers had lived in the Eighteen Northern Duchies. They were orphans who had been raised by an old man, whom they called 'Grandpa'.

Grandpa owned an ordinary restaurant and made enough to raise the five of them. Ever since they were young, the five siblings had been extremely strong. Their Grandpa had previously been a warrior in the army as well, and so ever since they were young, he had trained them. Unexpectedly, the five of them were astonishingly talented. When they were only sixteen years of age, their

muscular strength alone had allowed them to reach the sixth rank. By now, the five siblings were thirty, and their physical strength had reached the eighth rank in power.

After their Grandpa had died, the five of them had joined the army.

Within their duchy, which was one of the Eighteen Northern Duchies, these brothers were heroic figures, leading armies with impunity. In battles between duchies, warriors of the eighth rank could be considered top-level figures. These five brothers possessed incredibly durable bodies and very fierce attack power.

However...

In the end, they were still discovered by the Radiant Church's forces. The Radiant Church immediately dispatched two nearby experts of the ninth rank to lead people to capture them. They had resisted, but when they did, the Radiant Church's men had wiped out all of their families.

The Barker siblings stared death at these men around them.

The five siblings previously had three wives and two children amongst them. The two unmarried ones also had women they loved, but now everything had been destroyed by the Radiant Church.

"They've arrived."

Linley had been paying attention to that particular courtyard every day. He saw that the previously empty manor was finally filled with people, and judging from the sound of it, quite a few people.

Zassler's eyes flashed with a green light for a moment. Laughing sinisterly, "We've waited for over ten days. Finally, it's time. Linley, when should we act?" Zassler looked over to him. They had definitive superiority of power. No matter when they acted, it would be successful.

"Later at night." Linley decided.

Zassler nodded as well.

The nearby Blackcloud Panther, Haeru, was pretending to hide in the grass of the courtyard. The time passed quietly, until nightfall came. The prefectural city of Deco grew quieter and quieter. By nightfall, it was almost totally silent.

Linley, who had been seated in the meditative position, suddenly opened his eyes.

“Let’s go.” Linley glanced at Zassler. “Be careful.”

“Don’t worry.” Zassler laughed self-confidently. “I’m going to summon the undead right now.” After just a few seconds, two golden-furred zombies appeared out of thin air. After a while longer, a humanoid figure wrapped in a black cloak appeared in the middle of the courtyard.

“What is this?” Linley glanced perplexedly at the black-robed humanoid.

“An Ancient Wight of the peak-stage ninth rank.” Zassler laughed delightedly.

Linley nodded. His side had many powerful experts, while the opponent only had two experts of the ninth rank. What’s more, they were attacking from ambush. This battle wouldn’t prove to be challenging at all.

“Let’s go.”

Linley jumped directly over the wall, with Bebe and the Blackcloud Panther following close behind. Zassler, his two golden-furred zombies, and the Ancient Wight also followed behind Linley.

Soon, they arrived at that residence.

“Let’s act separately. I’ll go deal with the guards overseeing those five siblings, and then together, we’ll slaughter our way through each room,” Linley said in a low voice.

“Let’s move.”

The five Barker siblings were in one room. Outside the room were two warriors of the eighth rank standing guard. The two were fairly relaxed, casually scanning their surroundings while chatting.

“Hrm?”

The moment before their deaths, they seemed to have sensed something, as they turned to look. But all they saw were two devilish flashes of purple light.

Blood fountained out of two severed necks.

“Swish!” Bebe, Haeru, the Ancient Wight, and the two golden-furred zombies



all charged towards the other rooms, while Linley hurriedly ran into the room with the five siblings.

Upon entering the room, the Barker siblings stared at this 'monster' in astonishment. His entire body was covered in black draconic scales, and spikes were emitting from his forehead and back. What's more, Linley had a pair of dark golden eyes that chilled the hearts of those who saw it.

"Who... who are you?" No matter how bold Barker was, right now, he was rather shocked.

But the only response to his question was a violet flash of sword light.

"Swish!"

Struck by Linley's 'Bloodviolet Godsword', those dark golden ropes all split apart. After having mastered the 'impose' ability, Linley's usage of the Bloodviolet soft sword had reached a new level as well.

'Impose' was not restricted by weapon.

A fist could also summon the 'imposing power' of the heavens. A sabre or a knife could as well. Bloodviolet was sharp to begin with. Now, with Linley's battle-qi permeating it, chopping through the ropes was a very easy task.

Seeing the ropes split open, the five siblings immediately understood that this man had come to rescue them. But before they even had a chance to express their thanks, suddenly...

"F\*ck off!" An angry shout.

"Aaah!" A pain-filled scream.

The look on Linley's face changed, and he hurriedly returned to the main courtyard. He saw the black-robed Ancient Wight moaning in pain on the ground, while the stone floor of the courtyard was now covered with cracks. Clearly, these were caused by the Ancient Wight smashing into the floor. In addition, there were hints of green blood on the ground as well.

"What is going on?" Linley was shocked.

Zassler, too, was very surprised. "Not good. There's an expert here." The Ancient Wight was a peak-stage combatant of the ninth rank, and its body was

extremely durable. The expert in the room was able to injure it heavily and sent it flying in just one move. This was too terrifying.

“Bebe, Haeru, come back,” Linley mentally ordered.

Bebe and Haeru transformed into two black blurs as they returned to the courtyard. By this time, the five Barker brothers had walked out as well, but Linley kept his gaze focused on that room.

“Hrmph.”

With a cold sneer, a short, skinny man walked out from the room. His short silver hair looked like steel wire. This man looked very cold, especially when one saw his icy gaze.

Stehle glanced coldly at the Ancient Wight. “A necromancer?”

Turning his head to look at Linley and Zassler, he sneered, “I was wondering who it was. So it’s the necromancer Zassler, and that so-called genius, the Dragonblood Warrior Linley.”

All the higher-ups of the Radiant Church were very familiar with Linley’s Dragonformed appearance.

“Excellent. All of you are targets of the Radiant Church. Today, I’ll take you all.” Stehle’s lips quirked upwards, a cold smile appearing on his lips.

“Swish, swish.” Linley’s draconic tail swished about, slapping the ground.

Suddenly, an earth-colored light covered the entire ground of the courtyard. Everyone in the courtyard felt their head momentarily grow dizzy. Zassler couldn’t help but fall to one knee, but then immediately afterwards, another layer of earthen light covered Zassler, the Ancient Wight, the two golden-furred zombies, Bebe, and Haeru. They no longer were suffering from the effects of this gravitational power.

Earth magic – Supergravity Field.

“So it is as our reports say; not only are you a Dragonblood Warrior, you are a genius magus as well.” Stehle laughed calmly. “Your gravitational field is around eight times that of normal. I didn’t expect that in just a few short years, you would advance from the seventh rank to the eighth rank. Sadly, a genius such as

you will die today.”

Stehle walked one step at a time towards Linley.

“Charge.” Zassler let out a low shout.

The two golden-furred zombies immediately let out deep growls, then charged towards Stehle. At the same time, Zassler and Linley’s allies all fled, as if by common agreement.

A cold flash of sword light.

The two golden-furred zombies were immediately chopped in half, collapsing within the courtyard.

“You want to flee?”

Stehle, in the blink of an eye, appeared in the air in front of Linley’s squad. He stood there in mid-air, wielding the longsword which he had just stained with the blood of the golden-furred zombies.

“It really is a Saint-level combatant.” Zassler laughed bitterly

Actually, earlier, when they had seen the peak-stage ninth-ranked Ancient Wight be heavily injured in one blow, Linley had already known that things were not good. He knew that this person was most likely a Saint-level. And now, they knew that to be a fact. Saint-level combatants were able to fly at an astonishing speed. There was no way they would be able to flee.

Linley and Zassler exchanged glances. They knew exactly what sort of situation they had found themselves in.

“I thought today’s activities would have been very stress-free. Who would’ve thought we’d run into a Saint-level combatant?” Linley was extremely unhappy about this. His dark golden eyes stared fixedly at Stehle. “No choice but to go all out.”

## The Profound Truths of the Earth

The night was as cold as water.

The cold wind of the deep night blew drearily. The squad that had belonged to Stehle had been wiped out earlier. Now, only Stehle remained.

Linley's side had Linley, Bebe, Haeru, Zassler, and the five Barker brothers.

The opponent's side had only Stehle.

But without question, right now Linley's side was in the weaker position. Even fleeing would be very difficult.

"The Supergravity Field's effects are ground-based. The farther from the ground one is, the less its influence is." Linley knew very well that once a Saint-level combatant were to fly several dozen meters above the ground, they probably wouldn't feel the gravitational field at all.

Right now, Stehle was hovering roughly ten or so meters above the ground.

"Even if he is impacted by the gravitational effect, at most it would be around two times normal gravity." As fast as lightning, Linley considered their options and how they could stay alive.

Zassler said in a low voice, "Linley, Saint-level combatants can fly, but much like flying magical beasts, although they can fly very fast at high speeds, their turning speeds and aerial agility is only perhaps one or two times faster than combatants of the ninth rank.

This reasoning was very simple.

Just like when humans ran at top speed. They would be able to run in a straight line quite easily, but if they were to suddenly turn left, then suddenly turn right, then suddenly run backwards and forward again, you would be lucky to reach a speed of a third of your regular maximum speed.

Linley understood this logic, but he hadn't thought of it just now. Now that he did, an idea flashed by Linley's mind.

"What, you want to resist?" Stehle was wielding that sword stained with green blood.

"Bebe, Haeru, don't leave the Supergravity Field's area." Linley's dark golden eyes stared at Stehle in the air. "Saint-level combatants are very powerful, but he is a warrior. He has no way to counteract the effects of the Supergravity Field. If he wants, he can stay in the air. Once he reaches the ground, his speed will be halved or cut to a third. By then, he won't be any faster than me, nor will he be faster than you."

Bebe and Haeru both let out a low growl.

But Zassler frowned. His speed wasn't that fast.

"Let us face him. We five brothers definitely won't allow ourselves to hinder you, benefactor." The Barker brothers called out. The five siblings' muscles began to ripple and bulge, making them seem like terrifying magical beasts.

Wielding the adamantine heavy sword in his hands, Linley stared at the mid-air Stehle. "Don't be rash."

Stehle was in no rush to act either, calmly staring down at them. As a peak-stage Saint-level combatant, how could he be worried about being unable to deal with these people?

"Speed?"

Stehle's sharp eyes stared coldly at Linley. "This tactic of yours might be useful against those who just entered the Saint level, but unfortunately... I reached the Saint level centuries ago. Kid, the Saint level isn't as simple as you seem to think it is. The Saint level isn't just about using strength to brute force things; it requires a deeper understanding."

Linley stood in front of everyone, sword in hand, staring coldly at Stehle.

This tactic was the only option available to him. Faced with a Saint-level's speed, he had no place to run. His only option was to remain in the Supergravity Field. Only then did he have a chance at life.

“Whoosh!”

Stehle suddenly shot towards Linley like a released arrow, his black robe slightly fluttering with the wind. However, that longsword of his, covered in golden light, chopped towards Linley at a very ordinary speed.

But once he struck out with his sword, a cold aura seemed to pervade the entire courtyard.

Linley instantly felt as though he had entered a frozen realm. He had been totally surrounded by that freezing aura, while at the same time, the entire area seemed to have been locked by that aura. Although that sword was moving at an ordinary speed, it chopped towards Linley with an irresistible force.

The ‘impose’ level!

“Hrmph.” Slowly yet inexorably, the adamantine heavy sword in Linley’s hands began to move.

Stehle’s eyes suddenly brightened.

“Slash!” His ice-cold longsword suddenly split the air, increasing in speed tenfold. In the blink of an eye, it arrived near Linley’s body.

Linley’s adamantine heavy sword was like a fish in water, agilely gliding through the air to block the ice-cold longsword.

One was fast. The other, slow.

But the strange thing was, the two swords intersected.

“Ruuuumble.” There were no other sounds when the adamantine heavy sword and the ice-cold longsword struck each other. Only, the air itself suddenly shuddered. Linley’s dark golden eyes continued to stare coldly at the opponent.

Profound Truths of the Earth – Triple Layered Waves!

Stehle only sensed a strange vibration being transmitted to him, as though three deep, powerful attacks were viciously attacking his heart.

“Booom!”

A terrifying noise exploded forth from Stehle as his silver battle-qi wildly

exploded forth in all directions from Stehle's body. Every single ray of battle-qi easily shot through the surrounding buildings like needles.

"Careful!" Linley roared loudly, immediately allowing the Dragonblood battle-qi in his own body to explode forth as well, frantically trying to block that omnidirectional blast of silvery battle-qi, so as to protect the five Barker siblings behind him. But despite doing so, he wasn't able to totally protect everyone, as several strands of silvery battle-qi still struck the five brothers on their bodies. "Slash!" Several dozen bloody lines were drawn on their bodies, but the five brothers had managed to survive.

"What astonishing defense." Linley sighed in amazement.

Fortunately, Stehle had only accidentally exploded his battle-qi, resulting in it going every which way. This was the only reason why the Barker siblings had not lost their lives, despite them being criss-crossed with bloody lines and wounds.

As for Zassler, in front of him was a lance-wielding knight who was wearing a suit of heavy black armor. This was the 'Black Knight Captain', one of the three primary peak-stage undead of the ninth rank under his command.

"Boom!"

The walls nearby all collapsed, and even the nearby manors were impacted by the vibrations. Some people were literally shaken to death by that omnidirectional blast of Saint-level battle-qi.

"Ah!"

"Help!"

The nearby folks all began to scream in panic. An explosion such as this woke up quite a few people in the prefectural city of Deco as well, and all the nearby citizens began to flee their houses.

Linley's group only stared solemnly at the mid-air Stehle.

A small hint of blood could be seen at the corner of Stehle's lips. Stehle wiped the blood off, and then stared at Linley in amazement. Finally, he sighed, "Linley, I didn't expect that you have already surpassed the level of utilizing the

force of the heavens and the earth. Admirable, truly admirable.”

Utilizing the force of the heavens and the earth was what was known as ‘impose’. This was the level which ordinary Saint-levels reached.

“He received this attack of mine without any preparation, and yet he wasn’t heavily wounded.” Linley’s heart had grown cold.

Stehle stared at Linley. He sighed, “Linley, I really feel that it is a pity. The current level of insight and understanding you have reached is roughly on par with most peak-stage Saint-level combatants. Generally speaking, the reason that most peak-stage ninth ranks are unable to break through to the Saint level is because their insights and level of understanding is insufficient. But for you, the opposite is true; you possess a very high level of understanding, but your battle-qi is far from being sufficient.

Linley himself understood this logic as well.

“For a genius such as you to die like this really is a pity.”

Stehle’s eyes began to grow sharp and fierce again. In a cold voice, he said, “Linley, so as to show my respect for you, I will use my most powerful attack to deal with you; the Ice-Bound World.”

“Actually, did you really think this Supergravity Field could affect me?” Stehle sneered, and then his body began to radiate a terrifying silver light. Stehle seemed to have transformed into the sun itself as his silvery light easily encompassed an area of several hundred square meters.

“My Supergravity Field?” Linley found, to his astonishment, that the earth elemental essence he had used to create the Supergravity Field had been totally wiped away by that silvery light.

Within several hundred meters, the area was the absolute domain of that silvery light.

“A twenty-one-year-old could actually reach such a level.” Stehle continually sighed as well. Many people wouldn’t be able to enter the Saint level despite working at it for hundreds of years. But Linley?

He was only twenty-one, and yet he was at such a high level of understanding.



“Bebe, Haeru, get ready to flee,” Linley transmitted mentally.

“Boss.” Bebe began to grow anxious.

“Don’t dawdle!” Linley mentally roared angrily.

Bebe and Haeru roared with fury, but they had no choice either. Right now, neither the five Barker brothers nor Zassler knew what to say.

Linley stood in front of all of them, staring at Stehle.

“My only choice is to use the higher levels of the Profound Truths of the Earth, which I haven’t truly mastered yet.” Linley’s dark golden eyes were fixed on his opponent’s. His adamantine heavy sword was in his hands.

The ‘Triple Layered Waves’ of the Profound Truths of the Earth was only the basics.

This most basic ‘Triple Layered Waves’, Linley was able to unleash with a 100% success right now. As for the higher-level attacks, Linley was much less confident. But right now, he had no choice but to give it a shot.

“Aside from the Profound Truths of the Earth, I also have that other, dangerous technique.” Linley’s eyes slowly began to turn red.

“Groooooowl!”

Linley hunched over. Suddenly, his dragon-scale covered legs kicked off the ground, blasting his body upwards like an enormous boulder from a catapult, smashing viciously towards the mid-air Stehle.

“Go back down.” Stehle coldly swung his sword down at Linley.

“Ah!!!!” Linley suddenly howled. The adamantine heavy sword in his right hand chopped viciously at Stehle with boundless strength and fury, while at the same time, his left hand flashed with a beautiful violet light.

The divine artifact – Bloodviolet Godsword.

The same moment he had drawn Bloodviolet, Linley had sent his spiritual energy into it, activating its terrifying, baleful presence. The entirety of Bloodviolet was now totally covered by that bloody red light.

“Bam!”

With Linley at the center, a surge of red, baleful light enveloped Linley. Even people hundreds of meters away began to scream in terror, and even the five Barker siblings were so terrified that they started quivering.

“Ah!!!”

Even Zassler’s heart was filled with fear. From a distance, people who saw Linley in the air, surrounded by that baleful red aura, all felt that he definitely must be a fiendish god whom they dared not rebel against.

As for Stehle, who was closest to Linley?

Stehle only felt a terrifying baleful aura completely envelope him. This baleful aura was even more terrifying than the aura that had been given off by Dylin, the King of the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts. That dense baleful aura entered his body, striking directly at his mind and soul.

“Kill!”

“Kill!”

Strange voices chanted nonstop in his mind.

Stehle felt as though he had returned to his youth, when he was a young beggar. He felt the same unbounded terror he had then, when each day he would be whipped by the leader of those men.

But the hearts of Saint-level combatants were extremely resolute.

“Ah.” Stehle suppressed the terror he felt, allowing the silver battle-qi in his body to explode. Under this sort of situation, Stehle was only able to utilize half of his power.

“Die!”

Linley’s eyes were totally red, and he chopped down at Stehle with his adamantine heavy sword.

“Bam!” “Bam!” “Bam!”

The adamantine heavy sword collided three times with Stehle’s sword. Each time, Linley’s right arm went numb from the shock, to the point where his hand was beginning to split open.

“Swish!”

“Swish!”

In the same time that the adamantine heavy sword had attacked three times, Bloodviolet had slashed over ten times as well. Each of the strange attacks chopped at the same location. Although Stehle’s battle-qi was very dense, the eighth sword blow had managed to pierce it. The ninth and tenth attacks actually pierced into Stehle’s muscles, but Stehle’s body was filled with that dense battle-qi as well.

Linley was unable to remain standing in mid-air. After delivering these ten blows, he began to sink downwards towards the ground.

“Hrmph.”

Stehle’s eyes had already turned cold. To be forced by a mere peak-stage combatant of the ninth rank to such a state was an absolute humiliation. Stehle let out a growl. “The Ice-Bound World!”

While falling, Linley saw that in the sky, a mirage of a shadow of a sword had split space-time itself. In the blink of an eye, it reached his body. At this moment... this illusionary shadow of a sword seemed to have wiped away the entire world. In Linley’s world, the only thing that existed was this illusionary sword.

Linley didn’t have any time to block.

Zassler, the five Barker brothers, and those people watching from afar felt that the surrounding temperature had dropped to an extremely, terrifyingly low degree. Frost began to gather on their eyebrows.

At the same time, the longsword in Stehle’s hands pierced towards Linley’s heart.

But Linley didn’t react at all, allowing the longsword to pierce towards him at will...

“Master!”

“Boss!”

Haeru and Bebe, these two magical beasts, could only watch helplessly as

Linley was about to be killed.

## True Experts

This sword attack by Stehle, in terms of level, had surpassed that of the 'impose' level. If the 'Profound Truths of the Earth' of the adamantine heavy sword was one sort of special attack, then this attack by Stehle could be summarized using a single word: Fast!

"I'm going to die?" Linley was filled with resentment and an unwillingness to die. He wanted to live. He hadn't yet attained his goals.

But unfortunately, in this world, many people died at times and places not of their choosing. After all, the world didn't revolve around any person. Many events would not cater to their desires.

"Boss."

Bebe's tears had already begun to flow.

But suddenly, Bebe was stunned.

Not just Bebe. Haeru, Zassler, the Black Knight Captain, the five Barker brothers, and even the far away group of onlookers were all stunned.

"What's going on?" Everyone was flabbergasted.

Linley was standing on the ground right now, while Stehle was stabbing down towards Linley from the sky. His sword was very, very close to Linley's forehead.

But the two of them didn't move; they were frozen in position.

Even the drop of blood dripping down from Linley's injured right hand had frozen in mid-air.

At this moment, it was as though the entirety of spacetime around Linley and Stehle had suddenly frozen. Objects, bodies... everything was paralyzed.

Not just them. Bebe, Haeru, Zassler, the five Barker siblings. All of them were frozen.

Silence!

A gloomy feeling. A terrible sense of loneliness and quiet.

A look of astonishment was in Stehle's eyes.

"Master Linley. Long time no see."

A gentle, playful voice rang out. A seemingly thirty-something-year-old man with long black hair, dressed in a loose robe, walked over. He looked the same as he always did; as though he had just woken up.

"Stehle, right? All of you young fellows have reached the peak of the Saint level. If I still didn't advance, I really would feel too ashamed to meet anyone." The lazy man dressed in the loose robe waved his hand. As though struck by a mountain, Stehle was sent flying backwards as though he were a meteor.

"Bam!" "Bam!" "Bam!" "Bam!" ...

Stehle's body slammed through over ten stone walls before finally hitting the ground.

"Linley, I haven't seen you in around three years, yes?" The indolent man beamed at Linley. At this moment, Linley suddenly felt as though he could move again. Bebe, Haeru, Zassler, and the five Barker brothers all regained their movement ability as well.

That terrifying suppressive aura had vanished.

"Lord Cesar." Linley immediately paid his grateful respects. Linley felt more gratitude towards Cesar than he ever had before. Just now, he had truly felt it was totally hopeless. The man had just saved his life. How could he not be grateful?

The person who had come was indeed Cesar. The King of Killers.

Zassler and the others all stared in astonishment, their mouths hanging open. What they had seen just then was simply too bizarre. And, faced with this man, Stehle was completely unable to resist at all.

The sound of stones rumbling could be heard. Stehle climbed to his feet. Although his face was covered in dust and dirt, he still walked over, staring with disbelief at Cesar.

“You... you... this... this...” Stehle was in total shock.

“This what? Haha, tell me. This what?” Cesar grinned evilly at Stehle.

Stehle had totally lost the demeanor and poise of an expert, only staring in Cesar in utter astonishment. He stammered, “God... God... Godrealm?!”

“Godrealm?”

Linley and Zassler were both astonished as well.

No wonder Stehle had been so astonished. Just now, when everything had suddenly been frozen in place, was the legendary power of a “Godrealm”. Only a Deity-level could utilize this power.

Right now, the Yulan continent had four supreme experts – War God O’Brien, the High Priest, and the King of the Forest of Darkness and the King of the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts.

But now... this King of Killers, Cesar, had his own Godrealm?

“Haha...” Cesar laughed.

“Lord Cesar.” Linley and the others stared at Cesar in astonishment.

Cesar beamed as he stroked his mustache. “Don’t be surprised. Stehle, you and the others have been too arrogant. Hell, your old man, Cesar, reached the peak of the Saint level over five thousand years ago, and my speed of training was far faster than yours. I’m a genius, you know.”

Cesar spat out a bit of saliva, harrumphing as he continued. “But your old man was stuck at the peak of the Saint level for over five thousand years. If I still couldn’t find a way to break through, I really would feel ashamed. Thus, two years ago, I finally broke through that tiny little barrier.”

Stehle, Linley, Zassler, and the others all remained silent.

Good heavens.

Just like that, another Deity-level combatant had been born.

Linley found it understandable, actually. According to what Grandpa Doehring had said, Cesar was a person from Doehring Cowart’s era, and even back then, he was a Saint-level expert. To break through after five thousand years and

finally reach the Deity level wasn't exactly something which happened out of nowhere.

"Lord Cesar." Stehle bowed respectfully.

Any Deity-level combatant was worthy of respect. Upon reaching the Deity-level, one could ignore the existence of even empires. They were the true, highest powers of the land. It wouldn't be too hard for a Deity-level combatant to wipe out the entire Holy Union, at most risking some serious wounds.

"What is it?" Cesar looked at Stehle.

Stehle said respectfully, "Lord Cesar, all these years, the relationship between the Radiant Church and you, Lord Cesar, has been quite excellent. I wonder if Lord Cesar would be willing to join us in the Radiant Church. As long as you are willing, Lord Cesar, I believe His Holiness, the Holy Emperor, would be willing to accede to any request."

This was a Deity-level combatant.

Most likely Heidens would even be willing to resign the Holy Emperorship to him. After all, with a Deity-level combatant overseeing the Church, the status of the Radiant Church in the Yulan continent would be totally different.

"Not interested." Cesar snorted. "Hell, over these years, your old man hasn't even been willing to manage the affairs of my own 'Sabre' organization. And you want me to work on your behalf?"

Stehle let out two awkward laughs.

Right now, most likely Cesar could stand in front of the Holy Emperor, wag his finger in the man's nose, then curse at him, and the Holy Emperor wouldn't dare make a sound. This was the prestige of a Deity-level combatant.

"Lord Cesar, if you are unwilling, we won't force it. But as for this Linley... he's killed many people of our Radiant Church. Lord Cesar, would you be willing..."

"Bullshit."

Cesar kicked Stehle in the stomach, but clearly, Cesar didn't use any force with the kick. "Linley is a master sculptor on the same level as master Proulx and the others. I don't have many hobbies. One is beautiful women, the other is



sculptures. You want to kill Master Linley in front of me? In your dreams.”

Stehle no longer dared to say anything.

Stehle was extremely frustrated, because this mission of his had been to escort these five siblings back to the Radiant Church. Those five siblings all had bodies that were of the eighth rank in muscle power alone. Once the Angels descended into them, they would transform into five peak-stage Saint-level combatants.

“Lord Cesar, that’s fine. The Church will of course give you face, Lord Cesar.” Stehle squeezed out a smile. “However, those five over there are people that our Church absolutely must have. No matter what the cost, we must take them back with us. I hope, Lord Cesar, you will agree.”

“Oh, those five? Take them. I don’t know them anyhow,” Cesar said casually.

The Radiant Church had indeed treated him quite well over the years. Thus, Cesar would give the Radiant Church face as well.

The five Barker brothers were astonished.

“Lord Cesar!” Linley said frantically.

“Linley, do those five people have some sort of very important relationship with you?” Cesar twisted his lips. “Doesn’t seem to be the case. Don’t bother with them, then. Just enjoy your own life. Why bother about theirs?”

This was Cesar’s temperament. He travelled alone, and acted as he pleased.

“Thank you, Lord Cesar.” Stehle was overjoyed.

Cesar beamed at him, then turned to look at the five Barker brothers. “Let me take a look and see who you are, that the Radiant Church would value you so highly.” Cesar swept the five Barker brothers with his gaze.

The five Barker brothers were indeed very eye-catching. Those 2.2-meter-tall bodies and terrifyingly muscular forms. All of them looked like enormous bears.

“The five of you had best not resist.” Stehle walked over. Zassler and Linley wanted to stop him, but under Stehle’s cold gaze, Zassler and Linley could only laugh bitterly inside.

How could they stop a peak-stage Saint-level combatant?

Linley had just used both the baleful aura of the Bloodviolet sword as well as the most powerful attacks of the adamantine heavy sword. Despite that, he had only given the opponent the most superficial of injuries.

“Linley, no matter what, we five brothers would like to thank you.” Barker, the oldest of the five brothers, said loudly.

“These five fellows are pretty large, aren’t they?” Cesar’s playful voice rang out.

Stehle immediately responded, “Yes, they are quite muscular.”

Cesar looked at the five men. His expression, originally playful, suddenly slowly sank into a brooding look. He even began to slowly walk towards the Barker brothers, one step at a time.

“Why are you coming over?” the third of the five brothers, Hazer, growled.

“Third bro, don’t be rude!” Barker growled back.

“Big bro,” the muscular man said unhappily.

Cesar quietly stared at the five siblings. By his side, Stehle was beginning to grow surprised. In a low voice, he asked, “Lord Cesar, what are you doing?”

“Stehle, you can leave now,” Cesar said calmly.

“Then Lord Cesar, I bid you farewell.” Stehle said respectfully. Then he immediately shouted towards the Barker siblings. “The five of you, walk in front.”

“I said you can leave now. The five of them will remain behind,” Cesar said in a cold voice.

Stehle was startled.

Behind them, Linley and Zassler were both stunned as well. Even the five Barker brothers were shocked by these words.

“Lord Cesar, you...?” Stehle stared at Cesar in astonishment. Just moments ago, Cesar had agreed to let him take the five of them away. But in the blink of an eye, things had changed.

Cesar's expression was colder and grimmer than it had ever been. He stared coldly at Stehle. "Stehle. Listen clearly. Go back and tell Heidens this. If in the future, the Church's men make any attempts on these five brothers, then don't blame me, Cesar, for not giving you face when I slaughter my way to your Sacred Isle."

Hearing these words, Stehle was totally shocked.

"If you leave now, I'll pretend nothing happened today. Otherwise..." Cesar's eyes glittered with a cold light, and a terrifying murderous aura began to emanate from him.

Cesar was the King of Killers to begin with. He specialized in assassination.

And now, Cesar was a Deity-level combatant.

Once Cesar made the decision to go against the Radiant Church, just by engaging in assassinations, he could probably kill all the Saint-level combatants of the Radiant Church without suffering a single injury.

No matter what, the Church could not afford to offend a Deity-level combatant, much less a Deity-level combatant who specialized in assassinations.

"Alright." Stehle's heart was filled with bitterness.

It was also filled with rage. Rage at how overbearing and domineering Cesar was being. But Stehle knew that the person in front of him was a Deity-level combatant. He was qualified to be overbearing and domineering. He didn't dare to show his anger or to retaliate.

"Then Lord Cesar, I bid you farewell." Stehle bowed slightly, and then transformed into a blur, disappearing from the scene.

Linley, Zassler, and the five Barker brothers stared at Cesar in puzzlement.

"In the past, Cesar was always so lazy and lackadaisical. So why did he grow so solemn upon seeing the five Barker brothers?" Linley was extremely puzzled as well.

Cesar glanced at Linley and his group. "Come with me and leave this place. There are quite a few onlookers here. And... I expect Saint-level combatants

have already detected the powerful ripples generated by this battle.”

There actually were no Saint-level combatants in the prefectural city of Deco.

The closest Saint-level combatant was over a thousand kilometers away. Even Saint-level combatants would take quite a while to travel that sort of distance when flying.

Linley and the others immediately followed Cesar away from the battlefield. That very night, they left the prefectural city of Deco and entered the mountain wilderness. Only then did Cesar have everyone come to a rest stop.

“We’ll spend the night here for now.” Cesar sighed.

Right now, Cesar didn’t seem as carefree and unrestrained as he usually was. On the contrary, he seemed rather heartsick. Linley had the feeling that Cesar must have some sort of connection to those five siblings.

## The Undying Warriors

“Crackle.”

The bonfire was blazing. Cesar, Linley, Zassler, and the five Barker brothers sat around the campfire. Bebe was resting on Linley's thigh, while Haeru was lying behind Linley.

Camping overnight in the wilderness was fairly dangerous. But who or what could possibly threaten Linley's group? Especially with that Deity-level expert amongst them.

“Why did you save us?” the eldest of the five brothers said in a loud voice.

Linley and Zassler all turned to look at Cesar. This was a question they were curious about as well.

Cesar glanced at the five of them. He didn't respond, instead asking them a question of his own. “Your father? Your mother?”

“All our relatives are dead. As for our parents? We were orphans since we were young.” Barker replied. They were now in their thirties. To them, who had spent their entire lives in the war-torn lands of the Eighteen Northern Duchies, growing up without parents wasn't anything special.

After all, in those war-torn lands of the Eighteen Northern Duchies, orphans were a common sight.

“Orphans...”

Cesar let out a long sigh. “I didn't expect that after all these years, the ‘Armand clan’ whose fame shook the Yulan continent would fall to such a state.”

The five Barker brothers, Linley, and Zassler all started.

“Lord Cesar, are you saying that the Barker brothers are...” Linley had a guess

as to what Cesar was saying.

Cesar nodded. “Right. These five siblings belong to the Armand clan, the clan of the Undying Warriors, one of the Four Supreme Warrior clans of the Yulan continent.”

“Undying Warriors?” Barker and his siblings all stared at each other in shock.

“How is that possible?”

The five brothers rose to their feet, stunned. They were orphans since youth. How could they dare imagine that they belonged to one of the Supreme Warrior clans?

Linley had already guessed the truth as soon as he heard Cesar say the words, ‘Armand clan’. After all, Linley’s own clan records included information on each of the Four Supreme Warrior clans; the Dragonblood Warriors’ Baruch clan, the Violetflame Warriors’ Hyde clan, the Tigerstriped Warriors’ Prey clan, and the Undying Warriors’ Armand clan.”

Five thousand years ago, these four clans indeed were extremely famous.

Aside from the War God and the High Priest, without question, the Four Supreme Warriors stood at the absolute pinnacle of human power. Although there were other so-called peak-stage Saint-level combatants, those peak-stage Saint-level combatants couldn’t match the Supreme Warriors.

Power and insight; these were two mutually supporting, mutually complementing things.

For example, right now, Linley’s level of understanding was very high; he had surpassed the ‘impose’ level, and was nearing the peak-stage Saint-level in terms of understanding. But his actual power was extremely weak. Naturally, his attack force was far weaker than that of a Saint-level combatant.

Historically, the third Dragonblood Warrior had used a heavy warhammer.

When he had reached the Saint level, he was only at the level of ‘wielding something heavy as though it were light’. But despite that, he still possessed astonishing attack force.

This was because his body possessed a terrifyingly high degree of power and

battle-qi.

A person's strength and battle-qi were his most basic foundations. The higher one's level of understanding, the better one would be able to utilize those basics. For example, if your basics were at 100 - but you were at a low level of understanding, your actual attack power might just be fifty. But if you had a high level of understanding, you might be able to use all 100 of your attack power, or perhaps even more, reaching 200 attack power.

The Supreme Warriors, by their very nature, possessed several times more physical strength and battle-qi than other Saint-level combatants. Even if they were a bit inferior in terms of insight and understanding, their attacks would still be very terrifying. This was the natural gift of the Supreme Warriors!

There was nothing that could be done for it. They were able to gain an unfair advantage over others via their natural gifts.

"Your bodies must be extremely tough." Cesar sighed.

The five Barker brothers glanced at each other, then nodded. The second of the five brothers, Anke, nodded and said, "It's impossible for us to train in battle-qi, but just through our muscle power, we are on the level of warriors of the eighth rank."

"Aside from the Four Supreme Warriors, how could anyone else possibly break past the natural limitations of the body and reach the eighth rank just based on their body and muscles?" Cesar shook his head and said.

Linley was now certain as well.

Only the Four Supreme Warriors were restricted to using their own special battle-qi cultivation methods and be unable to train normal battle-qi.

"Amongst the Four Supreme Warriors, the Undying Warriors have the toughest bodies. Their defense is very powerful, and their attacks are legendary as well. The only weakness is that you are a bit slow." Cesar sighed. "Barker, you and your brothers are so young, but you were able to reach the eighth rank just based on your muscles and bodies. Aside from the most physically powerful of the Four Supreme Warriors, the Undying Warriors, who could possibly achieve this?"

Linley nodded as well.

Right.

He himself was a Dragonblood Warrior, but if he were to try to reach the eighth rank based purely on physical training, who knows how long it would take? Even his younger brother Wharton, who trained in accordance with the Secret Dragonblood Manual, had only reached the seventh rank this year at age seventeen.

“Aside from the elders of your clan, I’m afraid there is no one who knows more about you Undying Warriors than myself. You are definitely Undying Warriors. There is no question about this at all,” Cesar said with absolute certainty. “And what’s more, the five of you possess an extremely high degree of natural talent. If you were to train using the ‘Secret Undying Manual’, then most likely you would have already entered the ninth rank by now.”

“The Secret Undying Manual?” Barker and his brothers were confused.

Linley explained, “Barker, the truth is, all of the Four Supreme Warrior clans find other types of battle-qi to be unusable. Only by training in accordance with certain special ways can we develop battle-qi. As for your Undying Warrior clan, you can only train using the ‘Secret Undying Manual’.”

“No wonder we couldn’t train battle-qi no matter what we tried.” The fifth brother, Gates, said with a sigh.

“If the five of you had been in possession of the ‘Secret Undying Manual’, there’s no way you would have been caught originally.” Cesar sighed. “The Four Supreme Warriors all possess extremely powerful attacks. Amongst them, the Undying Warriors possess the highest defense, the Tigerstriped Warriors are the fastest, the Violetflame Warriors possess the strange Nirvana Rebirth ability, while the Dragonblood Warriors are the most balanced, possessing powerful attack, defense, and speed.”

Cesar was a man of Doehring Cowart’s era.

This was also the era when the Supreme Warriors appeared in the world.

“Lord Cesar, why is it that you treat us so... specially?” Barker asked with curiosity.



Hearing these words, Cesar couldn't help but think back to the past. His expressions grew complex. After a long time, he sighed. "Your ancestor, Armand, was the dearest friend and bro that I, Cesar, have ever had."

Armand, the first clan leader of the Undying Warrior clan, was also the first Undying Warrior.

"Five thousand years ago, the Yulan continent was in the midst of what was most likely the most chaotic, most dangerous era I have ever seen. The Four Supreme Warriors appeared out of nowhere, while the War God O'Brien became famous after his titanic clash with the High Priest. The Yulan Empire fragmented, as did the Pouant Empire. The entire continent sank into a mass of fire and floods."

Linley and the others all listened carefully, even though they knew this already.

"And this was just what was going on, on the surface."

Cesar grinned at Linley. "Actually, that era was much more complicated than you can imagine. The Yulan continent had more than just our native experts. Even powerful combatants from other planes had descended to the Yulan continent."

"Powerful combatants from other planes?"

Linley, Zassler, and the Barker brothers were all stunned.

"Right." Cesar chuckled. "To you, these are all distant, far away events, but that era really was chaotic. Many Saint-level combatants lost their lives. In that era, Saint-level combatants were nothing special, because there were many powerful experts who had descended... including many Deity-level combatants."

"Many Deity-level combatants?!" Linley felt his head grow dizzy.

"Right."

Cesar nodded. "Actually, five thousand years ago, organizations in some higher planes paid a very high price so as to allow their people to enter the Yulan continent. There was a reason they did this. Linley, you simply don't know

how fierce, how ruthless those battles back then were. At that time, Armand and I joined forces as we roamed the Yulan continent. Several times, I nearly died, but Armand rescued me. But of course... I helped out Armand several times as well.”

Cesar fell silent at this point, as though he were reminiscing about past events between himself and Armand.

Linley was growing puzzled.

The Pouant Empire and the Yulan Empire had fragmented five thousand years ago. The War God had entered the Deity-realm and became famous five thousand years ago. The Four Supreme Warriors had also suddenly appeared out of nowhere five thousand years ago...

And now, according to Cesar, five thousand years ago, even experts from other planes had descended to the Yulan continent.

“Five thousand years ago, something incredibly major must have happened.” Linley thought to himself.

“Enough of that. By the time your power reaches a certain level, even if you don’t want to know, there’ll be someone who will tell you.” Cesar chuckled.

Linley suddenly had the sense that the Yulan continent wasn’t as simple a place as he had thought it to be.

“Actually, there’s no need to force many things in life. Look at me. I eat when I should and play with women when I want to. I’m as carefree as I want to be. How wonderful is that? But look at that O’Brien, and that High Priest. Don’t be mistaken by their fame and glory. In reality, they are under enormous pressure.” Cesar quirked his lips.

Linley, Zassler, the five Barker siblings, Bebe, and Haeru all silently listened.

Listening to Cesar, this Deity-level expert, casually discuss the affairs of the most puissant experts on the Yulan continent, Linley had a very strange feeling.

“Only after reaching the Deity-level will one have the power to move mountains at will.” Linley silently thought to himself.

Cesar glanced at Linley. “Linley, let me give you a word of advice.”

“Lord Cesar, please guide me.” Linley said very modestly, as though he were a student again.

Cesar nodded. “I know there is a very deep enmity between yourself and the Radiant Church. But right now, you are far too weak. Even if you are able to wreck some of the plans of the Radiant Church and give them some small problems, you aren’t able to damage their foundations at all. I recommend that you quietly train for a time first. I don’t ask that you train to an excessively high level. But at least, after transforming, you need to be at the Saint level. That will be enough.”

Cesar had already realized that Linley possessed a very high level of understanding.

As long as Linley’s level of power were to enter the Saint level, then, aided by his deep understanding of reality, when faced with peak-stage Saint-level combatants, even if he wasn’t able to win, he would still have the hope of escaping.

“Understood.” Linley nodded.

“Barker.” Cesar looked at the five Barker brothers.

“Lord Cesar.” The five of them were extremely respectful. They now believed that they indeed were the descendants of the Undying Warrior clan. Since the man in front of them was a life-and-death friend of their ancestor, naturally they were very respectful.

Cesar nodded. “All of the Four Supreme Warrior clans have decayed. Armand’s clan has now decayed to the point where even your ancestral training methods have been lost. Fortunately... in the past, during the course of the dozens of years I had spent travelling with Armand, I procured a copy of the ‘Secret Undying Manual’. It should still be within the general headquarters of my Sabre organization.”

Hearing these words, the five siblings’ eyes shone.

They had just watched Linley transform. All of the Four Supreme Warriors had their own transformations. Even pre-transformation, the five of them had the power of warriors of the eighth rank. Once they acquired the secret manual,

they would be able to transform... and by then, their power would increase enormously.

“However, there’s a bit of distance from here to the general headquarters. Tomorrow morning, I plan to personally make a trip,” Cesar said.

If those high-ranking members of Sabre who had been personally trained by him in the past were to hear these words coming from Cesar, they probably would die from shock.

The ‘Old Master’, Cesar, was legendarily lazy.

There was over ten thousand miles distance from here to the general headquarters. This journey would be an extremely tiring one. For someone of Cesar’s lazy nature to make such a long round trip was quite the feat.

“Thank you, Lord Cesar,” Barker and his brothers said gratefully.

“No need. I hope that in the future, the five of you will restore the Undying Warrior clan’s reputation and fame.” Right now, Cesar was feeling quite emotional. Five thousand years ago, when he had roamed the world with Armand, at risk of dying every single day, was the most unforgettable experience in his very long life.

A night passed. The dawn came.

Nothing was left of the campfire but ashes. Linley and his squad all got up to send Cesar off.

“Lord Cesar, we will immediately return to a small town outside the prefectural city of Basil and settle down. When the time comes, you can just come find us there,” Linley said.

Linley knew that Saint-level combatants could use their spiritual energy to search for people. As for Deity-level combatants, as long as you gave them a general location, it was very easy for them to find someone.

“Got it. Haha. Train hard, kiddos. I’ll head off now.” Cesar had returned to his usual lackadaisical, noisy mood. It was as though after that night had passed, he was back to his old self.

Linley, the Barker siblings, Zassler, and the rest of the group all watched as

Cesar's figure flew through the sky at high speed, disappearing past the horizon.

## The Church's Strategy

After Cesar left, Linley's group immediately headed off that morning in the direction of the provincial capital of Basil. This time, they weren't in too much of a hurry. But for the five Barker brothers, who were warriors of the eighth rank, the speed at which they travelled was still quite fast.

By nightfall the next day, Linley's group arrived at a town near the provincial capital of Basil.

"This town is called Cloudpeaks Village." Zassler laughed as he introduced the town. "In the past, I spent over ten years in this small town. The people here are fairly honest and simple, and they rarely interact with the outside world. Generally speaking, very few people come here. It is quite peaceful."

Linley nodded.

What they needed was a peaceful place. This time, when he fought against Stehle, he had very nearly lost his life. Linley made up his mind that he would have to train until he was at least a warrior of the ninth rank in human form. That way, after being Dragonformed, his power would be at the Saint level.

"If I can reach the Saint level, then a few years later after that, when I combine my insights and understanding of the principles of using the sword with my superior speed, even if I encounter Stehle again, I'll still be able to flee, even if I can't win."

Linley had a very good grasp of the strengths of this mutated Dragonform he had.

After devouring the blood as well as the draconic core of that Armored Razorback Wurm, Linley's mutated Dragonform had inherited the strengths of the Armored Razorback Wurm; its speed and its defense.

As the five Barker brothers stared at the peaceful town, their eyes were firm

and resolute as well.

“There will definitely come the day when I will get revenge for my wife and my son.” Barker and his brothers also knew the state of affairs between Linley, Zassler, and the Radiant Church.

Without question, this group was now under the leadership of Linley.

This squad was completely composed of the enemies of the Radiant Church.

On the west side of Cloudpeaks Village, Linley and his people engaged in a quick transaction with some local nobles, spending ten thousand gold coins to invite many laborers to come and erect a new residence.

Ten thousand gold coins, in a countryside town such as this, was enough to build a very lavish residence.

The very next day, Linley brought Rebecca and Leena to this place. From this day forward, Linley’s team all quietly took up residence here, focusing on their training.

“Rumble.”

The ocean waves crashed against the shore, throwing up countless sprays of foam. Above the jade-blue ocean waters, a human figure could be seen flying over at high speed. In a short period of time, the human figure arrived at the shore. It was Stehle.

“Things have gotten complicated now.” Stehle was extremely frustrated.

The Church had placed a very high degree of importance on obtaining those five bodies. Most likely, it would even be willing to give up one of its Saint-level combatants or offend the O’Brien Empire to do so. In order to make sure nothing would go amiss, Heidens had even asked him, Stehle, to handle it.

But the result was...

Stehle stared at that distant, mighty Radiant Cathedral.

“Whoosh.” Stehle once more took to the air. The knights surrounding the Radiant Temple, upon seeing someone flying towards it, couldn’t help but tense. Only after seeing that it was Stehle did they calm down.

Within the ninth floor of the Radiant Temple.

“Oh, Stehle’s back.” Heidens had already seen through his window the sight of Stehle flying back through the air. “What’s going on? Why did Stehle come back alone?”

Heidens had a very bad premonition.

“Creak.” Without any forewarning, the door to his room swung upon. Stehle, as cold as thousand-year glacial ice, walked in.

“Stehle, what happened? Where are they? Where are those five bodies of the eighth rank?” Heidens was frowning and he asked his questions hurriedly.

Stehle shook his head. “Your Holiness, acquiring those five bodies is no longer an option for us.”

“What happened?” Heidens’ face sank.

Those five bodies represented five peak-stage Saint-level combatants. Their importance to the Radiant Church couldn’t be understated.

Stehle said in a low, somber voice, “Your Holiness, originally, I was escorting those five brothers along the way. But when we entered the prefectural city of Deco, we ran into two people.”

“Which two people?” Heidens didn’t believe there was someone capable of stopping Stehle.

“Linley, Zassler.” Stehle’s voice was extremely cold.

“Linley? Zassler?” Heidens was startled.

This Linley had disappeared for three years. He now appeared out of nowhere?

Heidens couldn’t help but think back to three years ago. Heidens truly did not wish to kill an ultimate genius such as Linley. But he had no other choice. However, three years ago, after Linley disappeared from Hess City, no one ever found any trace of him again.

But now, Linley was in cahoots with Zassler?

“Are you telling me that it was Linley who had rescued Zassler?” Heidens’



eyes lit up.

Stehle nodded. “Yes. This Linley is already extremely, extremely powerful. Beneath the Saint level, there’s definitely no one who can match him. Only Saint-level fighters or other extremely powerful fighters can defeat him.”

“Six combatants of the ninth rank. He can kill that many?” Heidens found it rather hard to believe.

Stehle nodded somberly. “Your Holiness, I must inform you that this Linley has two extremely powerful magical beasts. Both of them should be peak-stage magical beasts of the ninth rank. And in addition... in terms of insight and understanding regarding fundamental principles, Linley is already nearing the peak-stage Saint-level.”

“Nearing the peak-stage Saint-level?” Heidens was very shocked.

After all, the higher one’s level of understanding was already at, the harder it would be to progress to the next level of understanding. There were people who would spend hundreds of years training yet still fail to improve whatsoever.

“Yes. Linley has already surpassed the level of using the force of the heavens. His current form of attack is extremely strange and unique. What’s more, I have the feeling that right now, he has only mastered a small part of that level. Despite that, he was able to cause me a light wound.” Stehle couldn’t help but reflect on how bizarre Linley’s attack using the ‘Profound Truths of the Earth’ was.

“I’ve never encountered an attack such as that. That sort of attack wasn’t based on battle-qi, nor was it based purely on strength. It was...” Stehle paused, not quite able to find the right words to express it.

Hearing Stehle say such things, Heidens was very surprised.

An attack which could cause a light wound to a peak-stage Saint-level combatant such as Stehle was already, in and of itself, quite astonishing.

“What was so special about his attack? How would one defend against it?” Heidens immediately asked.

Stehle nodded. "His attack could pass through the exterior muscles and transmit its force directly into the internal organs. In other words, exterior layers of defense, no matter how powerful, are virtually useless."

"Oh?" Heidens frowned.

"This technique is a weapon aimed at attacking the internal organs of a person. In order to defend against this technique, the best method is to use battle-qi to internally protect all of the body's internal organs, covering them all with a layer of battle-qi."

Actually, these vibrations which Linley's attack created, when passing through material barriers, would still lose a bit of power.

But because this was a sort of vibrating wave, no matter how high your external defense was, it would still transmit its power through your defense. However, if the opponent's organs had a highly dense, concentrated layer of protective battle-qi over it, the vibrational waves would be slowly weakened by the battle-qi. By the time it reached the internal organs, its threat level would be rather low.

"There's no way to completely defend against this sort of attack. The only option is to use a high amount of battle-qi to ameliorate its effects." Stehle sighed in praise. "And, again, I have the sense that Linley has just recently begun to understand this technique. In the future, his attack will most likely be even more powerful. This can probably be classified as the strangest type of attack I have ever seen."

Stehle had a very high opinion of this technique.

This made Heidens all the more worried.

"This Linley must be killed." Heidens was now truly starting to grow worried. If Linley was to be permitted to continue to develop like this, he would pose a true threat to the Radiant Church.

"Continue. I'm sure the two of them weren't enough to stop you," Heidens said in a somber voice.

Stehle nodded. "Indeed. Both Linley and Zassler are only of the ninth rank. But just as I was about to kill Linley, a person appeared out of nowhere. Cesar.

The King of Killers, Cesar!”

“Cesar?” Heidens said doubtfully. “He shouldn’t be willing to dare fight face to face against the Radiant Church directly.”

“Wrong. He dares.” Stehle sighed. “Cesar has reached the Deity level.”

“Reached the Deity level!”

These words were like a lightning bolt slamming into Heidens’ mind, making him momentarily feel dizzy. Yet another Deity-level combatant had appeared in the Yulan continent.

“Deity-level?” Heidens stared at Stehle.

“Yes. Deity-level.” Stehle nodded again.

Heidens was silent for a long moment.

“What did Cesar say?” Heidens said calmly.

“Cesar said, in the future, our Radiant Church definitely must not have any designs on those five brothers. Otherwise, he will shed all pretense of cordiality with us and slaughter his way to the Sacred Isle.” Stehle’s words were like a hammer to Heidens’ heart.

These five vessels of the eighth rank symbolized five peak-stage Saint-level Angels.

This was too heartbreaking. Heidens didn’t want to accept it.

He didn’t want to accept it!!!

“Why would Cesar say such a thing?” Heidens’ eyes narrowed. “Based on my understanding of Cesar, he’s a man who has no interest in power or authority. He enjoys living a carefree life. He wouldn’t spend a single iota of effort on a stranger.”

This was indeed the case. Cesar truly didn’t care about the lives or deaths of others.

“For a lazy person such as Cesar to be willing to go this far...”

Heidens’ eyebrows suddenly shot up, and his eyes lit up.

“I understand now.” Heidens sighed.

“What’s the reason, Your Holiness?” Stehle asked.

Heidens sighed yet again. “In the records that the Church has regarding Cesar, there was information regarding Cesar’s experiences alongside his good friend Armand in the chaotic era of five thousand years ago. The people whom Cesar truly values have always been the descendants of Armand.”

“The Undying Warriors?” Stehle began to understand as well.

“Right. I’ve always been very surprised how five bodies of the eighth rank could suddenly appear here in the Yulan continent. But now, it makes sense. Undying Warriors. The most physically powerful of the Four Supreme Warriors.”

Heidens was silent for a long period of time. His thoughts regained their normal clarity.

“We can’t touch those five siblings. That is without question.” No matter what, they couldn’t afford to offend a Deity-level expert.

“Linley’s level of talent is simply terrifying. We simply cannot allow him to live.” Heidens looked at Stehle. “Stehle, Cesar didn’t say that he would go to war against the Radiant Church for Linley’s sake, did he?”

Stehle nodded.

Heidens smiled confidently.

“That’s more like him. Although he likes stone sculptures, he definitely wouldn’t go to total war against the Radiant Church for the sake of a master sculptor.”

Cesar was an arrogant loner.

There were very few people for whom he would really be willing to go all out. And Linley was not one of them.

“Stehle, go and get some rest. When you leave, order someone to have Lyndin come,” Heidens ordered.

“Yes, Your Holiness.”

Roughly ten minutes later, the sound of knocking at the door.

“Enter,” Heidens said calmly.

A tall and beautiful woman with a head of silver hair walked in. Without question, she was a woman so beautiful as to make any man go wild. But that icy beauty of hers was the type that would make others not dare to approach her.

“Your Holiness.” Lyndin bowed.

Heidens immediately issued his order. “Tomorrow, take five Angels of the ninth rank with you and head directly to the O’Brien Empire. The goal for this mission is to kill Linley. In a while, I will have a scroll containing information about Linley delivered to you.”

“Yes, Your Holiness.”

Lyndin was a Radiant Angel who had descended into a body of the sixth rank. Although it was quite hard to find bodies of the seventh and eighth ranks, bodies of the sixth rank were quite common. Thus, the Radiant Church had quite a few Angels of the ninth rank.

“Remember, you must kill Linley, no matter the cost,” Heidens instructed yet again.

Lyndin started, then expressed assent.

Angels possessed astonishing power. Even the weakest Two-Winged Angels had early-stage Saint-level power. Lyndin’s true power was very powerful; however, bound by the restrictions of their vessels, they weren’t able to put them on full display.

But if they were to go all out...

They were fully capable of unleashing their Saint-level power in exchange for their lives.

Most importantly... six Angels were capable of forming the legendary ‘Angel Battle Formation’. With the six of them joining forces, even an early-stage Saint-level expert would most likely be killed, to say nothing of Linley.

“Go,” Heidens said calmly.

They were just six Angels of the ninth rank, after all. For the sake of killing

Linley, he'd be willing to sacrifice six more if necessary. After all, Linley's natural talent had truly terrified Heidens.

“He cannot be allowed to continue to grow!”

## Time Passing Slowly

The O'Brien Empire restricted the worship of other religions within its borders, and so the Radiant Church and the Cult of Shadows were forced to keep their forces in hiding. If and when their forces were discovered, the O'Brien Empire would mercilessly stamp them out.

This attitude of the O'Brien Empire had caused the Radiant Church to never have the chance to expand its influence within the Empire's borders.

In important places such as the imperial capital or in the provincial capitals, the Radiant Church still managed to place quite a few forces in hiding, but in prefectural cities, they would have at most a few dozen people.

As for those ordinary cities, some places had a few people, others had none.

And the towns? No need to even mention them.

The density of their web of influence wasn't very high. Thus, the Radiant Church's forces which had been sent to locate Linley couldn't find any trace of him. They had no idea where this Linley had run off to.

Even though they didn't know where Linley was hiding, the Lyndin's team of six experts still departed from the Sacred Isle and headed towards the O'Brien Empire.

Outside Northwest Administrative Province's provincial capital of Basil. Cloudpeaks Village.

Linley, Zassler, Barker and his brothers, Rebecca, and Leena were all living here quietly. Aside from their training, Rebecca and Leena spent their time making sure Linley and the others were all fed.

The explanation they gave to the local villagers was that Linley was a noble. Zassler was his housekeeper, and the five Barker brothers were his guards.

Linley's team was located in the western side of the village, several hundred

meters away from any other residences.

“Big sis, today the skeleton I summoned was so cute! It looked so silly.” Rebecca and Leena were on their way back from the local market, carrying baskets of fresh vegetables.

Aside from their training, they spent much of their time cooking.

“Rebecca, don’t always waste your time playing around. After summoning a skeleton, release it back. You are wasting too much time playing around with skeletons.” Leena was somewhat unhappy.

Rebecca was too undisciplined. Every day, she would play around with and tease the skeletal warriors she summoned.

“I know, big sis. I’ll catch up to you soon,” Rebecca said in a low voice. Her sister was already capable of summoning zombies.

It must be said that both Rebecca and Leena were quite talented. They were progressing quite rapidly in the arts of Necromantic Magic.

The two of them walked to an empty spot of land. Currently, the manor that Linley had designed was still in the construction phase. And thus, Linley had erected a series of wooden cabins for them to live in for now.

“Big brother Linley’s training method is so weird.” Rebecca murmured.

Right now, Linley was wielding the adamantine heavy sword in one hand and the Bloodviolet Godsword in the other. In Linley’s hands, the adamantine heavy sword danced about as though it was totally weightless. But Bloodviolet was the opposite; it seemed to carry a thousand tons of force with each blow.

“Wielding something heavy as though it were light, wielding something light as though it were heavy...”

Linley had a hint of a smile on his lips.

Regardless of whether he was using Bloodviolet or the adamantine heavy sword, his level of understanding could be applied to both. For example, the ‘impose’ level could be used with virtually any sort of attack.

Sabre, sword, staff, rod, fists, or kicks.



‘Impose’ could be used with any of these.

This is why using it could be described as ‘calling upon the force of the heavens and the earth’.

As for the level of ‘wielding something heavy as though it were light’, there was no way one could use it on the Bloodviolet Godsword, because this sword was already very light. After pondering for over ten days while seated meditatively on the floor, Linley suddenly became aware of how ponderous and all-encompassing the wind which blew through the skies really was. Finally, he had his flash of insight.

The wind was invisible. When it was gentle, it could be like the kiss of a lover. But when it was aroused into a vicious storm, it could split mountains and shatter stones.

“Wielding something light as though it were heavy.”

Linley hacked out with the Bloodviolet Godsword. The nearly invisible, diaphanous sword let out a thunder-like sound as out of nowhere, a tornado suddenly appeared.

“The wind-style single-combat spell, ‘Dimensional Edge’, is an extremely powerful one-on-one magical attack spell. The power of the Dimensional Edge spell is so great that it can hack apart the dimensional walls itself. Then...would it be possible to duplicate the effects of the Dimensional Edge through sword techniques?”

Linley considered this question.

The correct roads would all lead to the same destination, despite the path. The level above ‘impose’, when using the adamantine heavy sword, was achieved by Linley through using his insights regarding the Laws of the Earth.

As Linley saw it, with regards to the Bloodviolet Godsword, to surpass the ‘impose’ level, he would have to utilize his understanding of the ‘Laws of the Wind’.

Only by selecting the correct avenue of training would one not be led astray.

Right now, Linley was quietly considering which avenue of training he should

embark on. But the fundamental Laws of the universe were very profound and very abstruse. To understand them was very difficult. Fortunately, Linley has exceptional elemental affinity for both wind elemental essence as well as earth elemental essence, and thus was able to reach a very high level of attunement with nature.

But despite that, without multiple years of training and time, it would be virtually impossible to make much progress.

“Swish.”

A blur slashed through the air, then landed behind Linley.

“Lord Cesar.” Linley turned his head, then immediately paid his respects.

Cesar laughed and nodded. “Where are Barker and his brothers?”

“They are training in the empty space behind their room. Lord Cesar, please follow me.” Smiling, Linley headed towards the area behind the room, but as he did, Cesar suddenly stared at Linley’s feet in astonishment.

Although on the surface, Linley appeared to be no different from normal people, but...

What sort of person was Cesar? How could he not tell?

He could clearly sense that Linley was walking in an extremely rhythmic manner, seeming to carry with each step a certain vibration. In truth, what had happened was that Linley had immersed himself in his silent training for so long that even when he walked, his steps would also embody the throbbing pulse of the earth.

“He truly is talented.” Cesar praised in his heart.

After walking for a short distance, Cesar saw Barker and his siblings. The five of them were in an area filled with countless giant boulders the size of houses, which they were using as part of their weight training. The entire area was suffused with an earth-colored layer of light.

“Haaaargh!”

The muscles on the bodies of the Barker brothers were rippling and gleaming, with the veins sticking out like snakes on their bodies, making them look

extremely powerful and mighty.

“Lord Cesar.” Upon seeing Cesar, Barker and his siblings immediately stopped their training.

“You five fellows really do train hard, eh?” Cesar quirked his lips in a grin. “What sort of effectiveness are you seeing from your training?”

The fourth of the five siblings, Boone, said excitedly, “In the past, when we were training, we didn’t sense much improvement. But now that we are training in this Supergravity Field, both our muscles as well as our internal organs are strengthening and improving.”

The area under the effects of a Supergravity Field would see the local gravity increase dramatically.

Higher gravity could benefit the muscles, the organs, and the entire body.

“Excellent. I made a long round trip, and brought back with me the secret manual I had copied by hand all those years ago.” With a flip of his hand, a rather thin book appeared in front of Cesar.

Barker and his brothers stared at this manual, their eyes shining.

“This is the Secret Undying Manual?” The fifth brother, Gates, stared at it with wide, hungry eyes.

“Take it.” Cesar began to laugh.

The fifth brother, Gates, snatched it over, his hand moving like a blur. He immediately opened the manual and began to read, with the other four squeezed together like five giant bears, craning their necks over and staring at it with eyes as big and wide as ox-eyes.

This spectacle was actually quite funny.

“Haha.” Cesar began to laugh, while a hint of a smile was on Linley’s lips as well. Cesar looked at Linley. In a low voice, he warned, “Linley, I can tell that these five brothers are just like their ancestors. They are rather boorish and unrefined. If they are to travel alone, most likely they will be easily duped and cheated by others. I hope you can lead and guide them.”

“Lord Cesar, don’t worry.” Linley assented.

During this period of association with the five Barker brothers, Linley had discovered that these five men clearly differentiated between enmity and benevolence. They were very straightforward and didn't play any mind games. They'd curse out whoever they wanted to curse and wouldn't hide any of their thoughts.

Linley actually rather liked this sort of temperament. It was genuine!

"The five of them, upon training in accordance with the Secret Undying Manual, will improve at a very rapid speed. It won't be difficult at all for them to reach the ninth rank within a few years." Cesar sighed to himself.

Turning his head, he glanced at Linley. "This Linley is most likely worthy of my trust."

As far as Cesar was concerned, Linley couldn't even come close to comparing with the five Barker brothers in terms of importance. After all, these five were the descendants of the closest friend Cesar had ever made. As for Linley, he was nothing more than a sculptor whom Cesar, a statue aficionado, rather liked.

Towards Linley, he only felt appreciation.

But towards the five brothers, he felt the sort of doting love one might feel towards one's grandchildren.

Soon after, Cesar left again. After about half a year had passed, the manor was completed, and Linley and his team took up residence within, beginning a long period of quiet training.

Aside from Cesar, perhaps the only person who knew that Linley was living there was Yale.

Yale had long ago set up a system of sending someone each month to provide news regarding the Radiant Church, basic news regarding the Yulan continent as a whole, as well as information about Wharton.

Although they were living in this village, Linley thus was still kept very well informed about the affairs of the Yulan continent.

Within a forest on the west side of Cloudpeaks Village, Linley was training by himself.

Three years.

They had spent three full years within the quiet Cloudpeaks Village. During these three years, the Radiant Church's forces had been searching fruitlessly for them. As for Linley, he had totally immersed himself within his training, and had advanced quite rapidly as well.

The wind rose, blowing the dead leaves to the ground.

Linley raised his head to look at the sky. Very high up above him, a Bluewind Hawk was flying with wings spread. A hint of a smile appeared on Linley's lips, and he suddenly thrust his adamantine heavy sword into the air.

"Boom!"

Originating from Linley's adamantine heavy sword, a series of faint cracks in space itself could be seen as a vibrational wave burst forward up into the sky at an incredibly high speed.

In the blink of an eye, the vibrating waves had traversed nearly a thousand meters.

"Boom!"

The body of the Bluewind Hawk, a magical beast of the fifth rank, shuddered, then began to collapse from the skies.

"I've finally reached the level of the 'Hundred Layered Waves'." Linley's eyes were filled with a hint of confidence. "If today, that Stehle were to be struck by me again, he most likely wouldn't get off with just a light wound this time."

Profound Truths of the Earth – Triple Layered Waves!

Profound Truths of the Earth – Ten Layered Waves!

Profound Truths of the Earth – Hundred Layered Waves!

After spending three years, Linley had already reached an extremely high level of understanding with regards to the Profound Truths of the Earth, and his attack power was now much more terrifying as well.

Within a thousand meters distance, he could kill a magical beast of the fifth rank

Most likely, even an early-stage Saint-level combatant would be hard pressed to accomplish such a task. After all, battle-qi, when being transmitted through the air, would slowly be weakened by air resistance. When the distance reached a certain length, the power of the attack would be almost negligibly weak as well.

Compared to battle-qi, these ‘vibrational waves’ would still be weakened when passing through the air, but much, much less than battle-qi would be.

When using the Triple Layered Waves technique in the past, Linley could only kill a magical beast of the fifth rank at a distance of roughly ten meters. Any farther away, and the waves wouldn’t be powerful enough to kill fifth-ranked magical beasts.

But upon reaching the Ten Layered Waves stage of the technique, Linley could kill a fifth-ranked magical beast within a hundred meters.

But the Hundred Layered Waves was even more powerful. Even three thousand meters wouldn’t prove a problem, much less a thousand.

This was the true ace in Linley’s sleeve. Unless he was in a dangerous situation, Linley wouldn’t willingly use this technique.

“But how to break past the barrier for the Profound Truths of the Wind?” With a flip of his hand, Linley returned the adamantine heavy sword to its sheath, then drew out the Bloodviolet Godsword.

Over the past three years, Linley had gained some insight regarding the fourth level of using the Bloodviolet, the Profound Truths of the Wind. But his insights were only limited to the simplest level; the ‘Rippling Wind’ technique.

“This shouldn’t be the case. Wind magic isn’t just fast and flexible. It should also have extremely powerful one-on-one attack abilities. How, then, can one execute the ‘Dimensional Edge’ through sword attacks?”

Linley had a certain feeling that the effects of the ‘Dimensional Edge’ spell absolutely could be displayed through the Bloodviolet Godsword. But it was as though the road to that level was covered by a dense fog, leading Linley to have no idea where he should try to make the breakthrough.

“Big brother Linley, big brother Linley!” Rebecca’s clear voice rang out from

outside the forest.

Linley grabbed the Bluewind Hawk by the neck and headed out of the forest with the hawk in his hands. This hawk would serve as part of dinner.

“Big brother Linley, your letter just came.” Rebecca smiled radiantly at Linley.

“Oh?”

Each month, a new letter would come. Linley tossed the Bluewind Hawk over. “Rebecca, our dinner tonight will be this Bluewind Hawk.” As he spoke, Linley accepted the letter and tore it open.

## Undying Warrior Transformation

Reading the information in this letter regarding Wharton, Linley couldn't help but start to frown.

"Wharton has registered for next year's selection process to become an honorary disciple of the War God's College?" Linley was rather puzzled and also rather dissatisfied. "Why does he want to enter the War God's College? Even the personally taught disciples of the War God at most reach the Saint level. What, a Dragonblood Warrior can't reach the Saint level on his own?"

Linley knew very well that entering the War God's College wouldn't have much of an impact on their development.

After all, Dragonblood Warriors were absolutely guaranteed to eventually become peak-stage Saint-level combatants. The Supreme Warriors were nothing to trifle with.

As for the Deity-level...

Despite the passage of so many years since the War God O'Brien had founded the Empire, not a single one of his honorary disciples or personally taught disciples had reached the Deity level, right? The Deity-level wasn't something that could simply be taught by a Deity-level combatant.

"How could one's understanding of the Laws and principles of the world be taught? Everyone has their own insights. The road others have taken might not be suited to one's self."

Linley was somewhat unhappy with his younger brother's decision to register and attempt to become an honorary disciple of the War God's College.

However, his younger brother had grown up.

"I can't blame Wharton for making his own choices," Linley continued to read. At the very end, a hint of laughter appeared on Linley's face. "Haha, so this kid,



Wharton... haha..."

The letter Yale had ordered to be delivered explained in detail the reason why Wharton had registered for the chance to be selected as an honorary disciple of the War God's College. The primary reason was because of the Seventh Princess of the Empire.

"I hope that Wharton will have a perfect, unbroken love life. At the very least, it must not be like mine was." Linley blessed his younger brother silently.

Indeed, the reason Wharton wanted to become an honorary disciple of the War God's College was because of her. Given that the master of the War God's College was the founding Emperor of the O'Brien Empire, War God O'Brien, upon entering the War God's College, it would be much easier for Wharton to wed an imperial princess.

After reading the letter, a flame emerged from Linley's hands.

"Crackle." The letter was reduced to ash.

Alongside Rebecca, Linley made his way back to their manor.

His days of peaceful training continued. Linley continued to keep an eye out for Wharton's affairs. According to the reports in the letters, the Seventh Princess of the Empire was an extremely beautiful girl, and she was also very adorable and kind. She was also doted on by her imperial father, which was why she had many pursuers.

Several of them had higher social statuses and rankings than Wharton.

However...

The Seventh Princess of the Empire was on very good relations with Wharton. She would often go out to play and joke around with him.

The next year, the competition to join the War God's College began. This was also the fourth year for Linley and his squad here at Cloudpeak Village.

"Big brother Linley, here's your letter."

Rebecca once more delivered a letter to him. Linley immediately opened it and began to read. Based on the timing of events, this letter should have information regarding the grand competition.

Given his younger brother's ability, he should be able to succeed.

"Oh? He failed?" Reading the contents of the letter, Linley frowned.

The competition to become an honorary disciple of the War God's College had resulted in a young man named Blumer capturing that position. This sort of competition wasn't the type of competition where the last man standing would be given the position.

It was a series of competitions resulting in a total of ten finalists. From within these ten finalists, either the War God himself, or one of his personally taught disciples, would select the next honorary disciple.

Wharton had indeed become one of the ten finalists, but in the end, the War God's College had selected Blumer.

"Yet another genius?" Linley was very surprised.

Blumer was currently 32 years old, yet had just entered the ninth rank as a warrior. This astonishing natural talent was indeed quite incredible.

"But in terms of talent, Wharton should still be somewhat superior to him. This year, Wharton should be twenty-one years old, but he has already entered the eighth rank as a warrior." Linley had learned just a month ago that Wharton had entered the eighth rank as a warrior.

A twenty-one-year-old warrior of the eighth rank was very astonishing as well.

"Hrm?" Reading Blumer's background information, something caught Linley's eye.

"Blumer's older brother is actually the Prodigy Sword Saint, Olivier?" Linley was quite surprised. Olivier was that genius who, immediately upon entering the Saint level, defeated the Stellar Sword Saint, Dillon.

It wasn't impossible for an early-stage Saint-level to defeat a Saint-level who had entered the Saint level many years ago.

What it required was a higher level of understanding and insight.

For example, Linley. Right now, his level of understanding and insight was already at the peak of the Saint level. Only, because his physical strength and battle-qi was too low, it was impossible for him to enter the Saint level at this

time.

As soon as he reached the required amount of strength and battle-qi, he would enter the Saint level.

This was why Linley now spent a large majority of his time training his battle-qi. He wanted to break through to the ninth rank as quickly as possible.

“I wonder how Wharton is currently feeling.” Linley wondered to himself. That buck-toothed, chubby-cheeked kid from years ago was now an adult.

Linley was truly filled with love and affection towards Wharton.

“The Emperor of the O’Brien Empire, if this letter is accurate, should already know that Wharton is the descendant of the Dragonblood Warrior clan. Given Wharton’s power, he clearly is capable of Dragonforming. As a Dragonblood Warrior, the imperial clan would not be disgraced by Wharton marrying the Emperor’s daughter.”

Actually, Linley didn’t really feel much respect or fear towards the so-called royal clans or imperial clans.

The only thing he feared and respected was truly powerful experts, such as the War God, the High Priest, the King of Killers, and the two Kings of the Forest of Darkness and the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts. The people who stood at the pinnacle of the world.

Understanding and insight was important. Physical strength was important as well! To Linley at his current level in particular, improving his battle-qi and physical strength was something he desperately needed.

When using the same technique of ‘wielding something light as though it was heavy’, the force of Linley’s attacks were dozens of times weaker than that of a Saint-level combatant.

The same was true for the Profound Truths of the Earth.

At this time, Linley perhaps could seriously injure a Saint-level combatant if he caught him off guard, but if a Saint-level combatant were to use the technique, he definitely could cause the opponent to instantly perish.

The three vibrational waves were the same, but the strength of the vibrations

was just on fundamentally different levels. The vibrational power unleashed by a Saint-level combatant would be ten times higher.

“The basics!”

Linley sat in the meditative position on his bed, all the muscles on his body twitching as though countless worms were crawling beneath his skin. The veins on Linley’s forehead were bulging outwards as well.

The azure-blackish battle-qi was rapidly circulating through Linley’s arteries, each time bringing with them the unique, nourishing, strengthening effects of the Dragonblood battle-qi.

Within his dantian region.

The battle-qi had already achieved a very high degree of density. That liquefied battle-qi was constantly swirling about at a slow pace in the middle of his dantian.

“Whew.”

Linley let out a long breath, and when he did, a white mist spat forth from his mouth in a line as flat as a sharp sword.

“Who knows how long it will take to advance from the peak of the eighth rank to the ninth rank.” In the past four years, Linley had managed to reach the peak-stage of the eighth rank. But as always when it came to training, the most critical juncture was also the one which took the most time.

Right now, Linley, when transformed, was still just at the peak of the ninth rank.

As soon as he broke through to the ninth rank, Linley would be an early-stage Saint-level combatant when Dragonformed.

The peak of the ninth rank to the early-stage Saint-level was a true transformation. There was an enormous difference between the two levels.

“Haha... hahahaha...” Suddenly, a bout of wild laughter erupted from outside the room. Linley stood up from his bed, puzzled. “Why are the Barker brothers so happy, this early in the morning?”

At this time, the sky was just barely lit, and the world was covered by a thick

fog. Ordinary people wouldn't even be able to see someone five meters away; all they would see was the fog.

"Big brother Barker, why are you guys ranting like this early in the morning? We sisters need our sleep!" Rebecca called out unhappily.

Linley's vision was far stronger than that of ordinary people's. At a glance, he could tell that the eldest of the five brothers, Barker, was so happy he couldn't control himself.

"Big bro, why are you so happy?" The other four siblings all came out of their rooms as well.

"I succeeded. I've broken through to the ninth rank." Barker excitedly said to his four brothers. "Haha, when transformed, I can finally reach the early-stage of the Saint level."

The Undying Warriors' transformation was very similar to that of the Dragonblood Warriors in this respect. If in their normal, human form, they were of the ninth rank, once transformed, they would be at the Saint level.

"Early-stage Saint-level?" Zassler, who had just walked out of his own room, was shocked as well.

Linley, the sisters, and the four brothers of Barker were both stunned as well.

Linley's eyes were shining.

"Barker, you've really broken through?" Linley said with uncontrollable excitement.

Barker nodded. "Yes, Lord. I truly have broken through." In the past, the Barker brothers all addressed Linley as 'Lord Linley'. Now that they were in the village, everyone was pretending that Linley was a noble and the five brothers were his guards, so naturally, they continued to address Linley as 'Lord'.

After four years, everyone had gotten used to this form of address.

After all, the five Barker brothers were very heroic, blunt figures. Their minds weren't nearly as agile as Linley's and Zassler's. The decisions of this group were primarily made by Linley.

"Let's go to the empty space in the west. Let us get a good look at your

current power,” Linley immediately said.

Everyone excitedly rushed out of the manor towards the empty space in the west side. Because the sun wasn't totally up yet, most of the people in the village were still sleeping. Not a single person could be seen.

“As soon as he transforms, he'll be Saint-level. Master, how long will it take before I'll be able to break through?” the Blackcloud Panther, Haeru, said with some frustration to Linley.

Haeru had already been at the peak of the ninth rank for a long time.

“Groooowl.” Bebe growled angrily at him. “Haeru, don't think I don't understand what your sly intentions are. You have designs on that Saint-level magicite core the Boss has.”

Linley laughed as he shook his head.

For a magical beast of the peak of the ninth rank to break through to the Saint level usually required them to make the breakthrough on their own. But of course, if they were to consume a Saint-level magicite core of the same elemental type as their own, there was a very high chance that they would be able to suddenly break through.

But of course, there was a chance of failure as well.

“Groooowl.” Haeru growled at Bebe as well. “Bebe, I'm not like you. You've been growing stronger this entire time, during the past four years. But I've stopped.”

Exactly what sort of magical beast Bebe was, no one knew.

But Bebe was definitely a type of magical beast whose natural talent was even more terrifyingly high than Blackcloud Panthers. Although four years ago, Bebe was roughly on par with Haeru, in truth, Bebe was still growing and developing.

After these past four years, Bebe at his current level of power could easily devastate the Blackcloud Panther.

In terms of speed or defense, Bebe was extremely terrifying.

“Most likely, even a Saint-level combatant would have to spend quite a bit of

effort to kill Bebe.” Linley’s heart was filled with appreciation. Four years ago, Bebe’s defense was already frighteningly high. Now, it was so high as to be unspeakable.

“Haeru, that Saint-level magicite core the Boss has is darkness-element, but you are dual-element, wind and darkness. If you eat it, the chance of failure is too high. It isn’t worth it! I’m a pure darkness-element magical beast. When I reach the end of my development, the chances of me making a breakthrough after consuming it is much higher than yours,” Bebe said arrogantly. “What, you aren’t happy? You want a taste of my claws?”

Haeru let out a growl, then fell silent.

Bebe arrogantly stuck up his little head. Haeru, this extremely arrogant magical beast, had been thoroughly cowed by Bebe.

Right at this time, Barker was about to transform.

“Bebe, knock it off.” Linley was focusing on Barker, who stood in front of everyone.

“Haha, everyone, watch carefully.”

Barker was extremely excited. With a popping sound, the muscles on his body began to constantly crackle and pop. The muscles on Barker’s body began to wildly expand, while at the same time, the color of his skin and muscles began to transform as well.

Thunderous crackles!

Barker, originally 2.2 meters tall, had now expanded in size along with his swelling muscles. In the blink of an eye, Barker had transformed into a terrifyingly large and powerful looking giant who was three meters tall.

Barker’s entire skin had turned into a light green color.

His skin and muscles seemed like they were made from stone, and those enormous, defined muscles clearly contained an unimaginable amount of power. Just by looking at him, one could tell this. And then, atop his light green skin, a layer of white, marble-like armor suddenly began to appear, eventually covering his entire body aside from his face. Even his head was covered by a

white marble helmet.

This so-called armor and helmet was grown from his very body. It was terrifyingly odd.

And then, Barker suddenly rose into the air, flying in a circle before settling down and hovering in mid-air.

“Haha, the Saint level. This is the power of the Saint level.” Barker excitedly smashed his two gigantic fists together. When he did, the air itself rippled from the force of that blow.

This was a Saint-level Undying Warrior!



## The Power of the Hundred Layered Waves

Surrounded by the foggy mist, Linley, the Arch Magus necromancer Zassler, Rebecca, Leena, Barker's four brothers, Bebe, and Haeru all stared at the Saint-level Undying Warrior in front of them with a mixture of astonishment and delight.

Those powerful, muscular arms and legs...

Just by looking at the Saint-level Undying Warrior, one could almost physically see the warrior's aura of power and might. In particular, that white, marble-like armor made Barker look as though he truly was a war machine.

Although the other four siblings were 2.2 meters tall, compared to their big brother Barker, they now seemed like under-age children. They only reached Barker's chest in height.

"The Saint-level. Big bro, how do you feel?" The eyes of Hazer, the third brother, were shining.

Standing in mid-air, the Saint-level Undying Warrior emitted a deep rumbling noise, and then allowed his voice to reverberate through the air. "The feeling... is of power. Unbelievable power. What's more, I can fly easily, as though it were a natural ability."

Most Saint-level combatants needed to reach a certain level of understanding and insight to fly.

But the Four Supreme Warriors were different. As long as they had enough power, the exalted, mysterious bloodlines of the Four Supreme Warriors would allow them to fly as though it were second nature to them.

It was similar to how some Saint-level magical beasts would immediately and naturally know how to fly upon reaching their age of adulthood and maturity.

This was an innate gift!

“Haha, second bro, third bro, fourth bro, fifth bro. Don’t be too stressed out. All of you are at the peak of the eighth rank, right? With just a single extra step, you’ll be at the ninth rank, and by then, after transforming, you will be like me.” Barker tried to keep his sonorous voice quiet, but he couldn’t help but express his excitement.

Seeing this, Linley also felt great excitement and joy on behalf of these five brothers, who were Supreme Warriors like him.

The Barker brothers had trained for much longer than Linley had. When they had been captured and then escorted by Stehle, they had already been over thirty years old. At that time, they had already entered the eighth rank for quite some time.

They were warriors of the eighth rank who had never trained using the ‘Secret Undying Manual’.

As soon as they did, it was only natural that they then developed at an astonishingly fast pace. After all, the power of one’s body was what determined how much battle-qi could be generated, and those powerful bodies of theirs... the five of them had all reached the peak of the eighth rank. And today, Barker had broken through the last gate and reached the ninth rank.

An Undying Warrior of the ninth rank in human form, an early-stage Saint-level after transforming.

“Breaking through from the peak of the eighth rank to the ninth rank isn’t hard, but it isn’t easy either. I might still need several years.” The fifth brother, Gates, pursed his lips.

It was hard to say when one would break through to another level.

For example, Linley was currently at the peak of the eighth rank as well. He might break through tomorrow, or he might break through in three to four years.

Barker suddenly looked at Linley. With excitement, he said, “Lord Linley, use that ‘Profound Truths of the Earth’ technique to attack me again.”

“You want to give it a try?” Linley laughed with resignation.

One of the reasons why Linley was able to make the five of them willingly address him as ‘Lord’ and accept him as their leader was because Linley had totally outclassed the five of them in terms of martial force. In recent years, the five brothers had trained in accordance with the ‘Secret Undying Manual’, and after transforming into Undying Warriors, they had sparred a few times with Linley.

Undying Warriors did indeed possess an astonishingly high defense.

But the strange vibrational attacks of the ‘Profound Truths of the Earth’ were able to pierce through the armor and the muscles of the Undying Warriors, suffering only a slight loss of power before attacking their internal organs.

At that time, Linley had only used his weakest ‘Triple Layered Waves’ against them, and at a reduced level of power. But despite that, the five brothers still suffered some light injuries.

“The Profound Truths of the Earth is an extremely dangerous technique. Barker, if you really want to give it a try, then it has to be like it was in the past. I’ll start at the weakest level of power, then slowly ramp it up one level at a time. I don’t dare use my most powerful attack at the very start.” Linley said sincerely.

Profound Truths of the Earth – Hundred Layered Waves.

The power of this attack was dozens of times greater than the Triple Layered Waves. According to Linley’s calculations, it shouldn’t be too difficult for him to use this attack to kill an early-stage Saint-level combatant.

“Don’t worry, Lord. Let’s do this one step at a time. I won’t try to show off too much.” Barker’s deep voice rumbled out.

“Fine, then.” Linley nodded. “You are already at the Saint level. I’ll transform into a Dragonblood Warrior as well.” Linley removed his upper body clothes, then allowed his body to become fully covered with black draconic scales, with the sharp spikes coming out as well.

In the blink of an eye, Linley had totally transformed into his Dragonblood Warrior form.

“Each time I see his Lordship’s eyes, my heart trembles,” the fifth brother,

Gates, said in a low voice. The other three nodded.

The dark golden eyes Linley had inherited from the Armored Razorback Wyrms were cold and utterly remorseless.

“Barker, first, I’ll use my fist to execute the Profound Truths of the Earth. If you can totally withstand it, then I’ll switch to using the adamantine heavy sword,” Linley said in a deep voice.

Through using his fists, he could still put the power of the Profound Truths of the Earth on full display.

Only, in terms of actual force, it would be about half of that which the adamantine heavy sword could generate.

“Alright, come. Don’t take it too easy on me.” Barker was full of excitement as well. Right now, his blue eyes had a hint of gold in them.

Launching off from the ground, Linley shot upwards like a vicious blur towards the mid-air Barker.

“Ten Layered Waves.” Linley let out a growl.

Like a thunderbolt, his right fist smashed through the air, landing directly against the white armor covering Barker’s chest. But Barker felt nothing at all as that seemingly titanic punch slammed against his body.

“Boom!” “Boom!” “Boom!” ...

The strange attack penetrated through his armor and his powerful muscles, then pierced through the Undying battle-qi surrounding his organs. Finally, like a warhammer, it smashed against his heart and his other organs.

His internal organs all quivered.

But then, the Undying battle-qi in Barker’s body once more covered his organs.

“Haha, I’m fine. Again.” Barker’s eyes were shining. Linley’s punch using the Ten Layered Waves had actually not been able to injure him at all. The only thing he felt was a slight tremble from his internal organs.

Linley nodded.

Indeed, if a Saint-level Undying Warrior, with their incredibly strong defense, wasn't able to take an empty-handed Ten Layered Waves blow, then Undying Warriors wouldn't be worthy of being praised as the Supreme Warriors with the greatest level of defense.

"Fine. I'll begin to gradually increase my attack power." Linley didn't waste any more words, immediately beginning to attack.

Barker knew very well that the weak point of the Undying Warriors lay in their low speed. In truth, even if he were to engage in a genuine battle against Linley, given Linley's superior speed, Linley could land one punch after another on him. The result wouldn't be too different from what he was doing right now; just standing there and letting Linley hit him.

The number of vibrations each blow caused slowly began to increase.

From ten layers, to twenty layers, to thirty layers...

"His defense truly is powerful. He's even managed to withstand ninety layers of vibrations." Linley's eyes were shining. He immediately called out loudly, "Barker, prepare to take my most powerful bare-handed blow!"

Barker waited for him there in mid-air.

Barker had to admit that just then, the ninety layered waves had caused him some injury. But due to the astonishing healing power of his Undying battle-qi, he had already pretty much recovered from that light injury.

"Hundred Layered Waves!"

Like a tempest, Linley shot into the air, his fist drawing closer and closer to Barker before finally smashing against his chest.

"Boom!" "Boom!" "Boom!" "Boom!" ...

Barker felt as though he had been smashed by an enormous meteor as both his body as well as his internal organs began to vibrate with a strength that he had never experienced before. A hundred vibrations occurred in the blink of an eye.

Barker felt his internal organs shudder, and he could already taste blood in his mouth.

He wanted to swallow it, but then another stream of blood was forced into his mouth by his organs. He could no longer repress it, and he spat out a mouthful of blood.

“Big bro!” Barker’s four brothers immediately ran over in astonishment.

“Barker.” Linley was surprised as well.

“I’m fine.” After spitting out that mouthful of blood, Barker actually felt much better. “I’m not injured too badly. My Undying battle-qi should be able to fully cure this sort of minor wound in just three days or so.”

Barker looked at Linley with admiration. “Lord, in terms of understanding and insight, you are on a much higher level than me. Although my body is more powerful than yours, I’m still unable to defeat you.”

The Linley of four years ago definitely wouldn’t have been a match for the current Barker.

But over the course of these four years, Linley had deepened his understanding of the Profound Truths of the Earth. By enhancing his original Triple Layered Waves to the current level of a Hundred Layered Waves, he had increased his attack power by several dozen times.

“If I were to use my adamantine heavy sword, the power of the Hundred Layered Waves would be doubled.” Linley said to himself. The power of the Profound Truths of the Earth, when executed by a heavy sword, was extremely great.

“If I used all of my power with the adamantine heavy sword and executed the Hundred Layered Waves attack, I could most likely heavily injure or even kill an early-stage Saint-level Undying Warrior.” Linley was now very certain.

The defensive abilities of the Undying Warriors were legendary.

If even an early-stage Saint-level Undying Warrior was unable to take this attack, how could an ordinary early-stage Saint-level combatant do so?

“Any early-stage Saint-level who encounters the Hundred Layered Waves attack will most likely die.” Linley felt extremely confident.

Raw power and level of insight were mutually supportive.

Compared to four years ago, Linley's raw power had not increased much. But in terms of the effectiveness of his level of understanding, he had improved by dozens of times. An ordinary peak-stage combatant of the ninth rank, upon reaching the Saint level, would generally only increase in power by around ten times or so.

"Barker," Zassler said with a smile. "In terms of raw power, the bodies of the five of you are not one whit weaker than Linley's. Your body, Barker, is in fact stronger than Linley's. But in terms of insight and understanding, you are too inferior. Linley has already told you that his levels of understanding can be divided into four levels; ordinary attacks being the first, 'wielding something heavy as though it were light' as the second, 'impose' as the third, and the 'Profound Truths of the Earth' as the fourth. But the five of you are still at the most basic level of using raw force. Your level of understanding and insight is far too low."

Barker deactivated his transformation, returning to his normal appearance.

"In the past four years, Lord Linley has already taught us much. But we five brothers truly..." Barker laughed awkwardly.

"Old man, do you think we are geniuses? His Lordship is around twenty-five years old, but has already reached the peak-stage of the Saint level in terms of insight and understanding." The fifth brother, Gates, didn't treat Zassler with any respect at all.

Zassler glanced at Gates unhappily.

"You are physically powerful and all use heavy weapons. You should easily be able to understand the level of 'using something heavy as though it were light'. But don't be too impatient. As long as you focus on your training, one day, you will perhaps understand it," Linley said encouragingly.

In truth, Linley had a large, unfair advantage.

His elemental affinity was, after all, exceptional. As a magus, he naturally was able to more easily attune with nature and commune with it. Pairing his inborn elemental affinity with his proficiency with the sword, it was very natural for him to be able to quickly deepen his level of understanding.

“Yes, Lord.” The five brothers all nodded.

The five Barker brothers all knew that right now, Linley was also at the peak of the eighth rank. As soon as he broke through to the next level, Linley would also be at the early-stage of the Saint level in his Dragonform. Given his already-high level of understanding, by then, the difference between Linley and them would be even greater.

“We can’t allow ourselves to become a hindrance to him.” The five proud brothers all decided to work even harder from now on.

In the blink of an eye, yet another year passed.

The autumn wind was still howling drearily, the same as before.

Staring into the distance at the Barker brothers engaged in their training, Linley couldn’t help but grin. All five of the Barker brothers were physically stronger than Linley, and Linley had paid for the Dawson Conglomerate to produce weapons for them.

Five long-handled greataxes.

Those long-handled greataxes were at least two meters long, and were astonishingly thick. In addition, the axeheads were extremely large as well. The greataxes themselves were made from the finest and rarest of materials, with each long-handled greataxe weighing an astonishing 5,300 pounds.

“The fifth brother, Gates, has a relatively higher talent for insight. He was the first to understand ‘wielding something heavy as though it were light’. The other four have yet to grasp it.”

Although over a year had passed, aside from Barker, the others remained stuck at the peak-stage of the eighth rank and had not broken through. The only pleasant surprise had been Gates coming to understand ‘wielding something heavy as though it were light’.

Zassler had spent this year in tireless training as well. This eight-hundred-plus-year-old man had been somewhat embarrassed by the rapid increases in power by Linley and the Barker brothers, causing him to become hard working as well.

Watching the dried leaves fall from the trees, Linley suddenly felt very much



at peace.

“Five years. It has been five years. I should go fulfill my end of the five-year agreement as well.” Linley looked towards the northwest, in the direction of the prefectural city of Cerre.

## An Appointment Kept

The five-year agreement. Linley still remembered his promise.

“I hope Jenne won’t be too determined.” Linley knew that even if in the end, Jenne elected to follow him, at most Linley would only be able to treat her as he did Rebecca and Leena.

Linley couldn’t reciprocate her affections.

After experiencing so much and passing one tribulation after another, the deepest part of Linley’s heart had been frozen and locked. That layer of ice covering it was very cold, very thick. To melt the hard ice surrounding Linley’s heart would be difficult. Very difficult.

But when he thought about affairs of the heart, Linley began to think about Wharton.

“According to Yale’s messengers, over this past year, Wharton and the Seventh Princess of the Empire have been quite passionate with each other. However, according to what the letter says, it won’t be easy for Wharton to successfully take the Seventh Princess as his wife.”

The Seventh Princess’s background was simply too excellent. She was virtuous, kind, beautiful, of high rank, and doted upon by her imperial father. There were too many suitors.

The only thing Linley could do was to silently bless his little brother and hope he would have a wonderful relationship.

At least, his brother couldn’t end up like him.

Half a month later.

“Lord.” The fifth brother, Gates, energetically sprinted over towards Linley, who had just completed a sculpture. With excitement, he said, “My big brother has also grasped the concept of ‘wielding something heavy as though it were

light’.”

“Oh?”

With a flip of his hand, Linley stored away his straight chisel. With surprise, he said, “Barker has reached the level of ‘wielding something heavy as though it were light’?”

“Right. Lord, why don’t you go take a look?” Gates advised.

Linley laughed. “How about this. Gates, have everyone come to the main hall. There’s something I want to tell all of you.”

“Oh.” Seeing Linley had something important that he wished to discuss, Gates nodded.

After a while, everyone congregated within the main hall. Many of them were animatedly talking about Barker reaching the level of ‘wielding something heavy as though it were light’.

“Everyone.”

Smiling, Linley walked into the main hall. “I have an important matter I need to take care of. On this trip, I will only bring Bebe and Haeru. As for the rest of you, all you need to do is to continue to train here. If everything happens quickly, I’ll be back in a few days. If I need a bit longer, I’ll send someone with a message.”

“Lord, you don’t plan to take us along?” Gates asked loudly.

“Continue your training.” Linley laughed as he glanced at Gates. “Gates, if you can reach the ‘impose’ level, or reach the ninth rank, I will take you as well.”

Gates immediately shut his mouth. He wasn’t Linley. Reaching the level of ‘wielding something heavy as though it were light’ was already quite difficult for him. He was still just at the basic stage of this level, and had yet to even master it.

“Enough. Tomorrow morning, I leave at dawn,” Linley declared directly.

The next morning at dawn, the Barker brothers, Rebecca, Leena, and Zassler all watched as Linley, dressed in a warrior’s outfit covered by a long black robe, rode off on the back of Haeru, his Blackcloud Panther, with Bebe seated next to

him. The man and the two magical beasts departed from Cloudpeaks Village.

His long black robe fluttered in the wind. Linley's weapons had all been withdrawn into his interspatial ring.

"Using the adamantine heavy sword to execute the Profound Truths of the Earth is extremely powerful; once that technique comes out, most likely the target will perish. Normally, it would be better for me to continue using the Bloodviolet Godsword."

Linley had already reached a fairly high level of proficiency in using his Profound Truths of the Earth.

But as for the Profound Truths of the Wind his Bloodviolet sword used, Linley's level of proficiency was quite low.

Linley didn't believe that using the Bloodviolet sword was necessarily weaker than using the adamantine heavy sword. After all, the forbidden wind spell was the single-target spell 'Dimensional Edge'. If magical techniques could create the effects of this spell, logically speaking, sword techniques should as well.

"Bebe, I've discovered that over these years, you've continued to improve. What sort of magical beast are you, exactly?" Seated astride Haeru, Linley laughed towards Bebe.

Haeru let out a growl. "Master, Bebe is a total freak. I've never seen such a freakishly powerful magical beast. Five years ago, he was about the same as me, but now, he's much more powerful. But he still hasn't reached the Saint level yet."

If Haeru had met the three sons of Dylin, the King of the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, he would know that there were other magical beasts in the world that were even more freakishly powerful than Bebe. Those three were terrifying magical beasts of the Saint-rank had easily swallowed over a hundred enormous dragons into their bellies.

"Bebe has grown somewhat stronger." Linley chuckled. "But Bebe seems to still be growing."

Linley suspected that Bebe was not fully an adult yet.

“Heh heh, that’s entirely possible.” Bebe narcissistically raised his little head. “When I, Bebe, reach adulthood, maybe I’ll be a Saint-level magical beast.”

Saint-level magical beasts such as the Bloody-eyed Maned Lion, the Savage Worldbear, the Violet-Eyed Goldfur Ape... these were magical beasts that would, as a natural part of their growth cycle, enter the Saint level as soon as they reached full adulthood.

This was the innate gift of these Saint-level magical beasts.

“I’ve heard of Saint-level magical beasts. But is there such a thing as magical beasts which would naturally grow up to reach the Deity level?” Linley sighed to himself. “Even if there are, I’ll wager they wouldn’t appear on planes such as the Yulan continent.”

They continued on their journey. By nightfall, Linley reached the prefectural city of Cerre.

On the streets of Cerre, there were many people mounted on magical beasts. However, most of those people were mounted on low-level or mid-level magical beasts such as Windwolves or Fanged Wolves.

When Linley rode the Blackcloud Panther on the streets, the other magical beasts all prudently retreated in terror, giving him space.

Although humans, when encountering strange magical beasts, might not be able to accurately gauge the beast’s strength, when a low level magical beast encountered a high level magical beast, they would easily be able to sense the difference in power.

“Hrm? A black panther?”

A very ordinary man in the streets of the prefectural city of Cerre saw Linley seated on his black panther, and his eyes immediately lit up. “He has a black panther, and he looks exactly the same as the picture. It must be him.”

The man immediately grew excited. He immediately ran out of the street, heading towards a small alleyway.

At the gate to the governor’s castle of the prefectural city of Cerre. As soon as Linley had seen the gate, he discovered that a large number of people were

congregating around the gate, awaiting his arrival.

“Big brother Ley.”

A young man and woman called out at the same time.

Linley immediately recognized them. The girl who had grown even more mature and beautiful was Jenne, while the handsome young fellow who was half a head taller than Jenne was most likely the grown-up Keane.

Keane and Jenne ran over excitedly.

The now nineteen-year-old Keane said loudly, “Big brother Ley, I heard from the guards a long time ago that a man riding a black panther had arrived. I immediately guessed that it must be you.”

Black panthers were extremely rare, after all. There were only two types; Blackstripe Panthers, and Blackcloud Panthers.

“Big brother Ley.” Jenne’s face was slightly flushed, and she looked expectantly at Linley.

“Let’s talk inside,” Linley said with a calm laugh.

All of them entered the castle. Since he had turned sixteen, Keane had officially taken over the management responsibilities of the city, and by now, he was a qualified city governor.

Last year, Keane had taken a beautiful wife. At the time, Keane had wanted to invite Linley, but unfortunately, he had no idea where Linley was living.

“Jenne, you’ve become a magus?” walking in the hallway, Linley laughed as he asked her this question.

Given Linley’s spiritual energy, he could immediately sense the aura of a magus coming from Jenne. The aura wasn’t particularly strong.

“Right. A water-style magus.” Jenne’s eyes shone with excitement. “Big brother Ley, after you left, I didn’t have anything to do. Afterwards, I realized that with you being so powerful, if I couldn’t do anything and kept on being a hindrance to you, that wouldn’t be a good thing. So, I went to have my elemental affinity and my spiritual energy tested. I didn’t expect that I was suited to train in water magic.”

When she was young, Jenne had been constantly suppressed and held down by her aunt, and thus didn't have the chance to train in magic at all.

Nobody had any idea that Jenne had the capability of becoming a magus.

"But my talent isn't very high. After five years, I'm still only a magus of the third rank." Jenne said quietly.

Generally speaking, from infancy until adulthood, one's spiritual energy was continuously growing. But for geniuses such as Linley and Reynolds, even if they hadn't trained in magic when they were young and only began once they reached the age of eighteen, they probably would have immediately started off with the spiritual energy of a magus of the third rank.

Eighteen years of growth, combined with five years of training. And yet, she was still only of the third rank.

Her talent could only be considered to be average, perhaps a bit higher than your ordinary magi.

"Big brother Ley, have a seat." Keane enthusiastically invited Linley to sit in the seat of honor. "Let me make some introductions. This is my wife, Irene."

Seated next to Keane was a very beautiful young lady, who had a pair of pretty blue eyes. Right now, this young lady was looking at Linley with curiosity. When she and Keane had first begun their courtship, Keane often would talk to her about Linley.

"Big brother Ley," Irene said courteously.

"Keane, everyone, just sit down and relax. Don't stand on so much ceremony," Linley said with a calm laugh.

Everyone sat down, but Keane continuously stared at Linley. Keane knew very well that the purpose of this trip had to do with that five-year agreement he had made.

Five years having passed, Jenne was now twenty-three. Because of training in water magic, Jenne's skin was now glistening, making her even more beautiful. And the now twenty-three-year-old Jenne now had a more-womanly aura.

During these five years, Jenne had many suitors.

And not just from the prefectural city of Cerre. Whenever Jenne and Keane went to attend the yearly events of the clan at the provincial capital of Basil, there would be many people who would attempt to flirt with or make passes at Jenne.

But Jenne still refused to pay any of them any heed.

“Jenne.” Linley looked at Jenne, cutting straight to the heart of the matter. “I imagine you still remember our five-year agreement. Jenne, I’ll tell you right now, in my heart, I truly can only envision you as a younger sister who needs someone to cherish her.”

Jenne’s entire body trembled, but in the next moment, she began to laugh.

Next to her, Keane and their housekeeper, Lambert, both let out a low sigh.

“Big brother Ley,” Jenne said. “I feel very fortunate to have a big brother like you. No matter what, no matter where, I’ll follow you. I just hope that you won’t discard me before I get married.”

Linley slightly trembled.

But he immediately understood that Jenne truly had made up her mind to follow him. But judging from what Jenne was saying, over the course of these five years, Jenne had already mentally prepared for what he had said today.

“Then you’ve decided to follow me and leave here?” Linley asked.

Jenne paused for a second. After all, she was very close to her brother, Keane. In her heart, she couldn’t bear to part with him either. But after taking a glance at Keane and seeing how happy and loving he was with Irene, Jenne’s worries melted away.

“I can follow you away at any time, big brother Ley. Big brother Ley, where do we go first?” Jenne asked.

“We’ll first pay a visit to a small town near the provincial capital of Basil,” Linley replied.

“The provincial capital of Basil?” Keane started, then immediately said, “Big brother Ley, our Jacques clan will organize a yearly gathering at the provincial capital of Basil each year. It happens every year on November 15th. The day will



come in three days. Big brother Linley, would you be willing to let my sis go with me one more time? It's in the same direction anyhow."

Keane looked expectantly at Linley.

Keane really couldn't bear to be parted from his sister. He knew that Linley roamed the world. Once his sister left with Linley, who knew how long it would be before the two would meet again?

Having grown up alongside his big sister, their affection was naturally very deep.

Linley looked at Keane, then looked at Jenne. Finally, he nodded. "Fine. We'll go to the provincial capital of Basil together. After you finish attending your clan's annual gathering, Jenne will leave with me."

"Thank you," Keane said gratefully.

While Linley took up residence for a few days within the prefectural city's castle, the Radiant Church's forces that were hidden within the prefectural city of Cerre were very excited.

"That Linley actually came to the prefectural city of Cerre. This is wonderful." A white-haired man said, his face covered with excitement. "Five years, five full years. We've finally found Linley."

The Radiant Church had been searching fruitlessly for Linley for five years. Sadly, due to their lack of manpower within the O'Brien Empire, their forces were primarily concentrated in places such as prefectural cities. Naturally, they wouldn't be able to discover Linley, who was hiding within a countryside village.

However, in this prefectural city of Cerre, the place where Linley had once stayed for quite some time, the Radiant Church had a good amount of people present.

"Hurry and send a message to Lady Lyndin in the countryside. Tell her that Linley has arrived at the prefectural city of Cerre," the white-robed man immediately instructed his subordinates.

Lyndin and the other five Angels, upon arriving at the O'Brien Empire, had searched everywhere for Linley for two full years, but had found nothing. In the

end, with no other choices, they had settled into a small town near the prefectural city of Cerre, ready to act at a moment's notice.

As soon as they received any news, they would immediately head out.

They would kill Linley no matter what the cost, even if it meant they would have to die with him. This was their fate as Angels.

## The Gathering in Basil

That night, Linley had dinner at the main hall of the governor's castle.

"Keane, Jenne. Come outside a moment." After finishing dinner, Linley called out to them, then walked out of the main hall to the quiet rear gardens.

Keane and Jenne exchanged glances, then followed Linley to the gardens as well.

The gardens at night were very peaceful and quiet. Looking at Jenne and Keane, Linley smiled. "Jenne, Keane, there's something I must inform you of."

Keane and Jenne stared at Linley, puzzled.

"The Radiant Church and I have a deep hatred between us. We will not rest until one or the other is destroyed."

These words from Linley immediately stunned Jenne and Keane. They knew that Linley was no ordinary man, but they had no idea that he was diametrically opposed to the Radiant Church.

The Radiant Church was, without question, an enormous entity.

Lowering his voice, Linley said, "Five years ago, when I fought with the Radiant Church, it most likely resulted in them becoming aware that I am in the O'Brien Empire. Five years ago, the forces of the Radiant Church became aware of Haeru's existence. I believe that just based on this alone, they should have discovered how I had followed the two of you to the prefectural city of Cerre."

Many people knew that back then, a mysterious expert with a black panther companion had protected Keane and Jenne on their journey to Cerre, allowing Keane to assume the position of city governor.

This wasn't a secret. It wouldn't be strange at all for the Radiant Church to find out about this.

“I suspect that the Radiant Church has definitely hidden quite a few people within the prefectural city of Cerre,” Linley said calmly.

From the moment he had decided to come to the prefectural city of Cerre, Linley had already made certain plans.

That Stehle had exchanged blows with him before. After that fight, the Radiant Church would certainly have realized how dangerous Linley was to them. If they didn’t send people immediately to kill him as soon as possible, then the Radiant Church really would be a pack of fools.

“Then what should we do?” Keane and Jenne were both rather bewildered.

“Jenne, first of all, let me ask you. Do you still want to follow me?” Linley stared at Jenne.

Jenne nodded without any hesitation.

Linley nodded slightly. “I’m afraid that within your castle, the Radiant Church has spies here as well. That’s what I want to let you know... that I plan to leave the prefectural city of Cerre tonight.”

“What?” Jenne looked at Linley in astonishment. “Big brother Ley, you plan to leave by yourself?”

“Don’t worry. I’ll just head out slightly before you do. I’ll head to the provincial capital of Basil first. I’ll take up residence in the eastern side of the city’s Nile Hotel. When the time comes, you can find me there.” Linley was very confident in his ability to deal with the Radiant Church’s men.

However, he couldn’t take Jenne and Keane along with him.

If he brought such a large group of people, he would be as good as harming Jenne and Keane.

“The Nile Hotel of the eastern city. This is a very famous hotel. I know where it is.” Keane nodded. Over these five years, he had paid quite a few visits to the provincial capital.

Linley had made these plans long ago.

Right now, whether or not he killed the Radiant Church’s forces wasn’t important. After all, killing those people didn’t make a huge difference to the

Radiant Church.

If he encountered them, he would kill them. If he didn't, then forget it.

As for Jenne, by the time they reunited with the five Barker brothers and Zassler, Linley would no longer be concerned about any schemes the Radiant Church might have to play.

"Then I'll leave now." Linley laughed.

"Immediately?" Jenne and Keane were startled.

"Immediately. That way, the Radiant Church's men wouldn't have any idea." Linley chuckled, then transformed into a black blur, flying through the air and disappearing from the rear gardens.

At the same moment, the Blackcloud Panther, Haeru, as well Bebe also departed at high speed.

Three black blurs flashed over the prefectural city of Cerre's twenty-meter-tall walls, easily crossing over to the other side. Although the city walls were useful against ordinary combatants, to experts on Linley's current level, they were nothing more than a fairly high door stop.

Riding on Haeru's back, the night wind howled past Linley.

"I've discovered that I rather like the feeling of travelling by night." Feeling the cool wind blow against his face, Linley felt very much refreshed.

The light of the moon seemed to make the world covered by a layer of thin gauze, making everything seem so dreamlike.

This night, there were people riding on horses at high speed heading to other places as well. These were the people who were rushing towards Lyndin to give her the good news. However, there was a distance of over a hundred kilometers from the prefectural city of Cerre to the town Lyndin was staying in.

Linley had only arrived in the prefectural city of Cerre at nightfall. The supervisor for the prefectural city of Cerre only received the news at around six o'clock at night. By the time he sent someone out, it was already seven o'clock.

At around eight o'clock at night, Linley had left the prefectural city of Cerre.

At this time, that messenger was still on the road. By around nine o'clock, the messenger finally managed to arrive at the town where Lyndin and the others were staying. The town was lit by fires. The poor man who had been blown on by the cold wind of November finally felt a hint of warmth.

"Lord Lyndin." The messenger man arrived at Lyndin's residence. Seeing Lyndin at the doorway, he immediately jumped off his horse. "Lord Lyndin, something important has happened. We've already discovered that Linley has arrived at the prefectural city of Cerre."

The eyes of Lyndin, who had been standing there coldly, suddenly lit up.

"Linley?" Lyndin was both shocked as well as overjoyed.

She had waited for five full years, to the point of being numb. And then tonight, this report had come out of nowhere.

"Syke, Syke! All of you, come out." Lyndin's cold voice rang out a few times, and the other five Angels immediately rushed over.

These six Angels were all wearing human bodies, and thus their power was limited to that of a warrior of the ninth rank.

But their essence was still that of the Angels.

They would definitely obey orders. For the sake of the glory of the Lord, they would be willing to sacrifice their lives at any time.

Upon hearing that there was news of Linley's return to the prefectural city of Cerre, the other five Angels grew excited as well. Their mission was to kill Linley.

"Let's go, we head out immediately," Lyndin immediately ordered.

"Yes." The other five didn't hesitate at all.

Lyndin and the others didn't bother about the messenger. The six of them, relying on their legs, immediately began racing towards the direction of the prefectural city of Cerre. As combatants of the ninth rank, without question, the speed they could reach was much faster than that of horses.

The next morning.

Within a very ordinary manor in the prefectural city of Cerre. The previous

night, Lyndin and her people had taken up residence here upon reaching the prefectural city of Cerre.

“What? Linley disappeared?” Lyndin stared coldly at the white-robed man in front of her.

The white-robed man immediately said, “Lord Lyndin, the people we stationed within the city governor’s castle didn’t know either. They only found out this morning that Linley and his two magical beasts disappeared. Most likely, they’ve left the prefectural city of Cerre.

“Bam!”

Lyndin angrily smashed a fist against the stone desk in front of her, smashing it into tiny pieces. The other five Angels were extremely angry as well.

The six of them had spent over five years here. They had just received word of Linley’s arrival, but then in the blink of an eye, he had disappeared again.

The white-robed man was somewhat nervous now. He knew that the six people in front of him were very powerful. Even the Northwest Administrative Province’s supervisor had to obey the orders of these six people.

However, the white-robed man didn’t know that these six were actually angels.

Only in the moments before the deaths, when Lyndin and the others chose to go all out, would their true power as Angels be put on display.

“Investigate. Go investigate. Find out where Linley has gone. Also... activate every resource we have in the entire Northwest Administrative Province. We must find Linley. Linley must be somewhere within the Northwest Administrative Province,” Lyndin said in a cold, deadly voice.

“Yes.” The white-robed man immediately assented.

They hadn’t been able to find Linley for five years. Lyndin had even begun to worry if Linley had perhaps left the O’Brien Empire. After all, given they had found no trace of him, there was no way they could be certain as to where he actually was.

But at least they now knew for sure that Linley was in the Northwest

Administrative Province.

Just as Lyndin was feeling furious at her helplessness on the third morning, they received word from the provincial capital of Basil.

“Linley has appeared within the provincial capital of Basil.”

As soon as they received this news, Lyndin’s other colleagues grew excited.

“Lord, shall we head out now?” The five looked at Lyndin expectantly. Lyndin was the captain of their squad. In fact, amongst the Descended Angels, Lyndin could be considered a fairly famous person.

The Angels that would descend into bodies that could only support the ninth rank were almost all Two-Winged Angels. Only three of them were Cherubim, Four-Winged Angels, and of the three, Lyndin was the only female one.

“That McKenzie is in the provincial capital.”

Lyndin frowned. “McKenzie has reached the Saint level nearly sixty years ago. From our reports, his power can be considered a mid-stage Saint-level. If he were to interfere, things would become complicated.”

“Lord, if we were to go all out, killing McKenzie shouldn’t be too hard.” Another nearby Angel, the one known as Syke, spoke out.

“Right. When going all out, we can allow our bodies to collapse and utilize all of our true power. The five of us are all Two-Winged Angels, while you, Lord, are a Cherub. Although it will only be for a short period of time, it should be enough to kill Linley.

Hearing her subordinate’s words, Lyndin hesitated.

Indeed. If Angels were to ignore their physical collapse, they could indeed use all of their real power for a short period of time. But most likely, after just two or three attacks, their bodies would have turned to ash.

When a Cherub and five Two-Winged Angels used the Angel Battle Formation and allowed their bodies to collapse from using their full power, even a mid-stage Saint-level combatant might die in their hands.

“No rush,” Lyndin said calmly. “Everyone, calm down. Going all out is our last resort. After all, pre-transformation, Linley isn’t that impressive. We can instead



find an opportunity where Linley is in his human form and directly kill him.”

“Lord, then your intention is to...” The five looked at Lyndin.

“That Linley doesn’t recognize the six of us.” A hint of a cruel smile was on Lyndin’s face.

That day, Lyndin’s group, led by the white-robed man, rode fine horses out of the prefectural city of Cerre.

“Lord, the military carriage up ahead belongs to the soldiers of the city governor of Cerre.” The white-robed man reported in a quiet voice to Lyndin and the others as soon as he saw them.

“Oh? Is it Jenne and Keane?” Lyndin glanced at the distant caravan.

Jenne and Keane’s relationship with Linley was something that Lyndin knew quite a bit about.

“Have your subordinates been mixed into their caravan?” Lyndin lowered her voice.

“Yes, Lord.” The white-robed man nodded. Smiling, Lyndin said, “That’s fine. For now, we don’t need to pay them any attention.

Lyndin’s group clearly travelled at a much faster pace than Keane and Jenne’s group. In the blink of an eye, they passed them by. The reason Keane and Jenne were making this trip

out to the prefectural city of Basil was because they needed to attend the annual dinner party.

Lyndin’s team and Jenne’s caravan were both headed towards the provincial capital of Basil. As for Linley, quite some time ago, he had settled down in the hotel in the east side of the city.

There was a small manor located right off behind the hotel. Linley was staying there.

“I came to the provincial capital of Basil in such grand fashion. Most likely, the Radiant Church’s men recognized me. I wonder who the Radiant Church will send out next time?

Linley wasn't worried in the slightest. He was actually quite eager.

"I haven't encountered anyone who could fight me head on yet, or force me to use the 'Hundred Layered Waves' level of the 'Profound Truths of the Earth.'

## Neighbors

The provincial capital of Basil was the base of operations for the ancient Jacques clan in the Northwest Administrative Province. Here, the Jacques clan could be considered the local kings. During their annual clan gathering, all of the various branches of the clan would hurry over to the provincial capital.

In the northeast part of the provincial capital, there was an extremely large and ancient castle. This was the headquarters of the Jacques clan.

Yulan calendar, year 10008. November 14th. This was a day when the Jacques clan's castle would always be decorated and brightly lit. The number of guards at the gate were tripled as well, compared to the past. In addition, many branch members of the clan were passing through the gates this day, arriving from all over the world.

"Sis, the clan's castle is much larger than ours, at least ten times larger." Keane peered through his carriage's cloth door while sighing in amazement.

This carriage contained three people. Keane, Irene, and Jenne.

Jenne also stared through the door. Nodding, she said, "The clan clearly has far more experts than us as well. Only, I wonder if Great-Grandfather will be there as well."

The Great-Grandfather which Jenne spoke of was McKenzie.

Each year, at the annual gathering, McKenzie sometimes attended but sometimes did not. However, two years ago, McKenzie did show himself once. That sighting had satisfied Jenne and Keane's desire to see the hero whom everyone in the clan worshipped.

"It is very possible. Irene has never seen Great-Grandfather." Keane held his wife's hands.

The caravan quickly arrived at the castle gates. It came to a halt. Jenne,

Keane, and Irene all knew the rules. They got off the carriage.

“Jenne!” a happy, teasing voice rang out.

Immediately upon hearing this voice, Jenne frowned, but then she squeezed out a smile. She turned her head and looked towards a young man with gleaming hair. “Cousin Albert.”

“Cousin Albert,” Keane and Irene also said courteously.

Albert looked like someone who was full of himself. Being educated since he was young had given him the airs of an ancient, noble clan, but just by looking at his eyes and his face, anyone could tell that this man was an empty-headed lecher.

But Albert was the eldest son of the current clan leader of the Jacques clan, and was the successor to the position as well.

The future clan leader of the Jacques clan. Who would dare look down at Albert, given his status?

“Jenne, you are growing more beautiful by the year. Keane, Irene, don’t just stand there like idiots, come in.” Albert warmly escorted Jenne and the others into the castle.

Because the family gathering was on November 15th, quite a few people arrived on the 14th. The night of the 14th, the castle of the Jacques clan was extremely lively.

“Big sis, feeling frustrated over Albert again?”

Keane walked into Jenne’s room. Seeing Jenne standing at the window and sighing, he immediately could guess at what Jenne was thinking about.

Jenne turned her head to glance at her younger brother. Frowning, she said, “That Albert doesn’t have any good intentions. Each time at our clan gathering, he’ll come bother me. These days never pass by easily.”

“Sis.” Keane took his sister by the hand. Apologetically, he said, “I know that the only reason you didn’t go with big brother Ley was because you wanted to spend a few more days with me.”

“Keane.” Jenne affectionately patted Keane on the head. “Keane, you are

even taller than me now.”

Keane lowered his head silently.

Jenne had taken care of Keane since they were young. Ever since they had arrived in the Holy Union, their mother had been severely ill, and so Jenne had taken care of Keane like a mother would have.

The affection between these two siblings was very deep.

“Jenne, Cousin Jenne.” Albert’s voice rang out again.

Jenne and Keane both frowned, no trace of enjoyment on their faces now. This Albert really was as annoying and stifling as a boa constrictor.

In the blink of an eye, Albert had arrived at the doorway.

“Jenne. Oh, Keane, you are here also.” Albert beamed. “Jenne, we’re organizing a small banquet in the main hall. Jenne, let’s go together. I’ve arranged for some people to prepare several beautiful evening gowns for you.”

Jenne shook her head. “No need. I’m feeling a bit dizzy and am a bit unwell.”

“Why would you be feeling unwell? Let me take a look.” Albert actually stepped forward, intending to touch Jenne by her forehead. Jenne immediately took two steps back.

Keane snickered from the side, “Cousin Albert, my sister isn’t feeling well. Let her have a good rest.”

Albert stood there for a moment, then laughed and nodded. “Fine.” He then stared at Keane. “Keane, come with me for a moment. Cousin Jenne, have a good rest. If there is anything you need, just let the servants know.” He gave Keane a meaningful look.

Keane nodded, then followed Albert out.

Within the flower garden.

Albert and Keane were walking together. Albert was silent, and Keane said nothing either.

After a long time...

“Keane, how does it feel to be the governor of a prefectural city?” Albert

suddenly asked.

Keane was startled. Slowly, he said, "Pretty good."

Albert laughed and nodded. "Of course it's good. You govern millions of people, Keane. You must understand that the entire Northwest Administrative Province has only ten prefectural cities. Positions like the city governorship are highly sought after, and many people keep their eyes on those positions. After all, our Jacques clan is a large clan."

As though he understood something, Keane nodded.

The Jacques clan was continuously starting new branches. Naturally, each generation was more numerous than the last. In the past, the reason why Keane's father, Count Wade, had been lucky enough to receive the governorship was because he was on very close terms with the previous clan leader.

In truth, the various city governorships were all controlled and decided upon by the clan leader of the Jacques clan.

After all, the Jacques clan had sole authority over the management of the Northwest Administrative Province.

"Keane, you should know that many of my younger siblings have grown up now, such as my own third brother. Right now, he's only a major in the army. Many of these people would very much like to become the governor of a prefectural city." Albert looked at Keane with an expression that both was and wasn't a smile.

Keane knew what Albert was hinting at.

"And not just my siblings. My uncles as well. In the past, they weren't able to overcome your father, but they've never given up."

Albert looked at Keane. "Keane, I have a very good impression of you. But you must understand that to get something, you have to give something."

Keane was silent.

"Keane, you have taken the city governorship, yes, but I, the future clan leader, can make you lose it as well." Albert saw that Keane was silent, and

began to speak more coldly.

“Cousin Albert, go ahead and state your desires.” Keane forced a smile to his face.

Albert laughed. “Haha, you are my cousin. Of course I won’t force you to do anything. I just hope that we can further deepen our relationship. For example, you can have your big sister marry me. What do you think?”

Keane was filled with rage.

He knew Albert’s intentions long ago. Such a gentle, beautiful, virtuous woman such as Jenne, especially after beginning to train in water magic, was a very mesmerizing, refined lady.

Albert had been lusting after her this entire time.

But Albert was already thirty years old and had three wives. If Keane’s sister were to marry him, she would be nothing more than a concubine.

What’s more, his sister was going to follow Linley.

“Cousin Albert, I’ve told you in the past that my sister already has someone she likes,” Keane said helplessly.

“What a joke.” Albert sneered. “Keane, if your sister has someone she likes, why hasn’t she gotten married yet? And even if she likes someone, we can just go ahead and kill him.”

Albert had desired Jenne for quite some time now. Not only was she beautiful, she was a magus. After a person trained in magic, their longevity would be extended. Most likely, even when she was sixty or seventy, Jenne would look like a thirty-year-old lady. Albert naturally desired a wife like this.

“You can’t kill him. The person my sister likes is an expert of the ninth rank.” Keane made up his mind.

“A combatant of the ninth rank?” Albert frowned.

This was troublesome. If he were the current clan leader, he could use the powerful soldiers of the clan to go kill that expert of the ninth rank. But he was only a successor. The people at his disposal were quite limited, and they weren’t very powerful either.

“Keane, you’d best not be lying to me.” Albert stared coldly at Keane.

Keane bowed slightly. “Cousin Albert, I’m definitely not lying. My sister likes him. There’s nothing I can do about that. Cousin Albert, I won’t disturb you any further. I bid you farewell.”

Albert let out a cold snort, staring at Keane as he left.

“Five years.” Albert stared in the direction of Jenne’s room. “This time, I definitely cannot let Jenne slip away again. So what if he is an expert of the ninth rank? Does he dare come and make trouble for the Jacques clan?” A fierce, wolf-like look was in Albert’s eyes.

On the 15th, Linley had headed to the headquarters of the Dawson Conglomerate early in the morning. Using his medallion showing that he was an elder, he sent some people to Cloudpeaks Village to inform Zassler and the others that he was going to be delayed.

And then, Linley quietly stayed in the Nile Hotel.

There were over ten manors behind the Nile Hotel, all of which were tall and well made. Linley was residing in one of them.

Within his courtyard, Linley finished carving a sculpture, and then began to wave his adamantine heavy sword about as he pleased.

Bebe and Haeru both lazily rested on the ground.

After training with the sword for some time, Linley came to a halt, a sudden thought having come to mind. “It has been a year since I reached the peak of the eighth rank. In this past month, I’ve always had this feeling that I’m about to break through, but for some reason, there’s just some tiny piece missing.”

To an ordinary person, breaking through from the peak of the eighth rank to the ninth rank wasn’t a big deal.

But for Supreme Warriors, the difference between the two was extremely great. Upon entering the ninth rank, Linley in Dragonform would be at the Saint level.

“I can’t be too hasty. My speed of training is already very fast.” Linley was still fairly calm. Staring towards the south, Linley once again began to think about



his younger brother, Wharton. “When I reach the ninth rank, I’ll head towards the imperial capital and meet with my younger brother. It has been a long, long time since I’ve seen Wharton.”

Ever since Wharton had left home when he was six years old and headed to the O’Brien Empire along with Housekeeper Hiri, the two brothers had never met again.

And now, Wharton was twenty-two years old. In another month, he would be twenty-three.

“Hrm?” Linley suddenly turned and stared at the courtyard walls.

The various manors operated by the hotel were all quite close to each other, with each plot of land divided into two manors. At this time, in the manor adjoining Linley’s, the person who was renting that manor had climbed over the wall and was peeking in this direction.

This guest was an extremely adorable, agile young lady. Her guileless eyes were staring in Linley’s direction, but they were locked on the Blackcloud Panther on the ground.

“Wow, what a huge panther.” The young lady very agilely hopped over the wall, and then jogged towards Haeru.

“Don’t touch him,” Linley immediately shouted.

The young lady came to a halt, smiling and laughing at Linley. “Big brother, I’ve never seen such an adorable, large black panther. Can I please touch him?”

This young lady had a head full of silver hair, and her eyes were very intelligent. She had a playful smile on her face, but she was dressed in the garb of a female warrior.

Linley took a sizing look at this silver-haired girl.

A warrior’s power was hard to gauge just by looking at them, but Linley could tell from this girl’s aura that she was at least a warrior of the seventh rank, or perhaps even higher.

“Haeru doesn’t like being touched by others,” Linley said calmly.

The silver-haired girl couldn’t help but pout, scrunching her nose up as she

frowned. “Hmph, I don’t believe you. My teacher’s magical beasts often let me touch them.” The silver-haired girl ran directly towards Haeru.

“Groooooowl.” Haeru suddenly rose to his feet, baring his sharp fangs as he stared coldly at the silver-haired girl.

The silver-haired girl was immediately frightened, and she stumbled back two steps.

“I told you. Haeru doesn’t like being touched. Enough, you can go back to your own place now.” Linley directly asked her to leave.

The silver-haired girl smiled bewitchingly at Linley. “My master told me that panther-type magical beasts are very formidable. Then big brother, you must be very powerful as well. Can I spar with you?”

“Spar?” Linley disliked his life being interrupted by others.

“Let me introduce myself first. My name is Danlan.” The silver-haired girl said with an adorable smile.

“You can call me Ley. But I don’t have any time for you. You can go back now.” Linley still spoke coldly and calmly. For a young girl to be at least a warrior of the seventh rank... she wasn’t as simple as she appeared.

The silver-haired girl pouted helplessly. “Oh. Got it.” And then she turned and left, although her heart was filled with frustration. “This Linley really is a cold fellow. Getting close to him will be difficult. But I won’t give up so easily either. If I can kill him easily, I will.”

This silver-haired girl was Lyndin.

But in terms of temperament, Lyndin had changed dramatically. In the past, she was an ice-cold Angel. But now, she had become adorable and lively. One had to admit that her acting skills were formidable.

“Oh, big brother Ley, you are a sculptor?” Lyndin looked at the sculpture Linley had just completed and immediately ran over in excitement. Staring at it, she said happily, “My teacher also likes sculptures, but he doesn’t know how to carve himself.” As she spoke, Lyndin carefully inspected the sculpture with great curiosity.

Linley frowned.

This silver-haired girl was really annoying!

## Vicious Acts

This sculpture was one which Linley had just finished not too long ago. Given Linley's current skill, his stone sculpting was at an extremely high level as well. This silver-haired young lady carefully examined the sculpture from every angle.

"Wonderful. Just wonderful."

After inspecting the sculpture with great care for a while, she turned her head to look at Linley. "Big brother Ley, I sense that this sculpture of yours is better than those of my master's, but I don't know exactly how to describe it."

Despite such an adorable girl looking at him like this, Linley only felt irritated.

"Miss Danlan, I need to train," Linley said tactfully.

The silver-haired girl nodded. "Okay, I'll leave right away." As soon as she said these words, Linley let out a sigh of relief. But then the silver-haired girl continued, "However, big brother Ley, after you finish training, you need to teach me how to stone sculpt."

Linley hardened his face. "Stone sculpting is one of the top tier artistic forms. How can I so easily transmit its secrets to others?"

Indeed, most master-level sculptors would not easily accept disciples.

"Oh." The silver-haired girl lowered her head in disappointment, beginning to walk to the nearby wall. And then, with an easy leap, she jumped to the other side.

"She's finally gone." Linley let out a long sigh.

But then, the silver-haired girl's head popped out from over the wall. "Big brother Ley, have a good training session. After you are done, I'll come and find you." After speaking, she disappeared again.

Lyndin returned to her own bedroom. Sitting down on a chair, her face

returned to its usual coldness, and her eyes were as icy and merciless as ever. If Linley saw her, he wouldn't be able to believe that someone was able to act so well.

"This Linley is suspicious of everyone, and won't let anyone easily get close to him. This is rather troublesome."

As a Descended Angel, Lyndin actually truly did not wish for her and the other five Angels to die alongside Linley.

However, as an Angel, she could not disobey orders.

One step at a time.

If she could easily kill Linley somehow, wouldn't that be better than sacrificing her life?

"Given the amount of care Linley has shown towards Jenne and Keane, it makes no sense that he would be so suspicious towards me." Lyndin had come up with this plan after learning about how Linley had treated Jenne and Keane.

As long as Lyndin could get into close physical range with Linley, given her power as a combatant of the ninth rank, she could suddenly ambush him from close range in his human form. She had a 90%+ chance to kill him in that sort of situation.

"Perhaps it was because he sensed my power." Lyndin shook her head. "This Linley has no sense of curiosity. I mentioned my 'master' several times, but he still didn't ask me who my master is."

Lyndin actually had prepared an entire chain of lines to fool Linley.

Although Lyndin appeared very young, in reality, her actual age was most likely far greater than that of Doehring Cowart. Only, the ten thousand years she had spent in the divine realm of the Radiant Sovereign hadn't been as impactful to her as the decades she had spent here.



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"From her personality and her attitude, that silver-haired girl seems like an

unreasonable little princess.” Linley frowned. “But her power...”

In truth, Linley was continuously wary of the Radiant Church’s forces.

As far as Linley was concerned, the Radiant Church’s forces should have already located him here by now. And now, all of a sudden, a young female warrior of the seventh rank appeared? Even if she appeared to be lively and cute, Linley wouldn’t easily trust her.

Before he trusted someone, he would take their strength into consideration.

If she had been a weak little girl who didn’t have the strength to kill a chicken, Linley’s attitude probably would have been much better. After all, even if you gave such a girl a weapon, she wouldn’t be able to hurt him at all. But this young lady was different.

If she were to suddenly attack him from a near distance, it would be very possible for her to heavily injure or kill him.

“Could it be that the assassin the Radiant Church has sent after me this time is this young lady?” But thinking back to the innocent, pure look in the silver-haired girl’s eyes, Linley found it rather hard to believe.

That night.

The silver-haired girl came again, but this time, she came pushing a hotel food cart from the front gate.

“Big brother Ley, I took the place of the servant in delivering dinner for you.” Lyndin’s clear voice rang out. Her face was covered with smiles, but Linley, looking at her, only felt a headache coming.

“You again?”

“What, is there a problem?” Lyndin pouted, then giggled, “Big brother Ley, I brought you dinner, so you teach me stone sculpting, okay?”

“No.” Linley refused.

“Stingy.” Lyndin wrinkled her nose. “When I cook for my teacher, my teacher will do anything I ask him to. You are a stingy fellow.”

“Your teacher is your teacher, I am not.” Linley simply wouldn’t agree.

This stranger was at least of the seventh rank, and perhaps even higher. Linley would not permit this female warrior to draw close to him, while teaching someone how to stone sculpt would definitely require them to be in close physical contact.

After all, this period of time was the period when he was expecting the Radiant Church to act against him.

“Remember. I don’t want you delivering my dinner,” Linley said coldly.

Lyndin’s face changed, and she glared angrily at Linley. “You bastard. You don’t know when someone is being good to you. I’ll definitely go tell my master. He’ll come over here and kill you.”

“Kill me?” Linley looked at the angry expression the girl’s face.

“Of course. My master is very powerful.” The silver-haired girl said arrogantly.

“Who is this oh-so-powerful master of yours?” Linley asked.

The silver-haired girl said arrogantly, “I’ll tell you. The name of my master is Haydson.”

“The Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson?” Linley was startled.

In the entire O’Brien Empire, if the War God was considered the number one expert, then without question, the second highest expert would be the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson. This Monolithic Sword Saint had been at the peak-stage of the Saint level for many years now, and he had never lost a single duel against any Saint-level experts.

He was flawless in terms of both offense and defense.

In addition, he was a very cold and remote person. Virtually nothing was capable of impeding his developments. A flawless, perfect Saint-level expert who towered above all others, his sense of flawlessness was the reason why others dubbed him the ‘Monolithic Sword Saint’.

“So now you know that you should be afraid?” The silver-haired girl laughed arrogantly. “But don’t worry. So long as you teach me how to stone sculpt, I won’t tell my teacher.”

“No wonder.” Linley looked at the silver-haired girl. “What rank are you

currently at?”

“The eighth rank already.” The silver-haired girl said proudly. “What do you think? The entire Empire doesn’t have many experts of the eighth rank who are younger than me.”

Linley glanced at the silver-haired girl. “Miss Danlan, you can go back and tell your teacher that I am unwilling to teach you stone sculpting. I want to see if he will come over and kill me.”

The silver-haired girl started, and then her attitude softened. Begging, she said, “Big brother Ley, I’m begging you, just teach me, okay?” As she spoke, she walked closer to Linley.

Linley directly took three steps back, retreating into his main hall.

“Miss Danlan, I need to rest now. You should go back.” Linley shut the door to his manor.

“Hrmph.”

The silver-haired girl let out a snort, then left.

The next two days, the silver-haired girl would try all sorts of things; she would buy beautiful clothes to bring to Linley as a gift, or pretend to be very pitiable and just watch Linley. It was as though she absolutely refused to accept the fact that Linley wouldn’t teach her how to stone sculpt.

The fourth day.

This morning, Lyndin came to Linley’s courtyard once more, as she had every day past.

“Big brother Ley, I’m leaving now.” Lyndin said in a somewhat lost voice.

Linley glanced at the silver-haired girl with some surprise. These past three days, Linley had been tormented by this girl to the point of getting a headache whenever he saw her. What’s more, Linley was still uncertain as to who this girl really was.

Someone belonging to the Radiant Church?

Or the disciple of the Monolithic Sword Saint?



But the longer he had interacted with Lyndin, the more Linley came to feel that this silver-haired girl really was the playful, active type. He didn't really think she belonged to the Radiant Church.

"If she is an assassin of the Radiant Church, then I am truly in awe of her acting abilities," Linley secretly said to himself.

Lyndin glanced at Linley helplessly. "Big brother Ley, I've always worshipped my master, and my master also likes sculpture. I really wanted to carve a good sculpture for him, but you aren't willing to teach me."

"It is useless if you do not have enough time and not enough talent." Linley shook his head.

Lyndin's eyes lit up. She quickly said, "I have both time and talent."

"Are you an earth-style magus?" Linley suddenly asked.

"No." Lyndin shook her head, then asked questioningly, "What does this have to do with being an earth-style magus?"

Linley shook his head. "If you are not an earth-style magus, that means you do not have the talent necessary to learn stone sculpting from me." Linley was telling the truth. The Straight Chisel School of sculpting required the sculptor to be an earth-style magus.

"You are just making that up." Lyndin took a step forward, pointing at Linley with a finger. "I've never heard anyone say that stone sculpting required one to be an earth-style magus."

"There's many things you don't know." Linley laughed calmly.

Right now, Lyndin was roughly two meters away from Linley. Lyndin was calculating to herself, "Two meters distant. In his normal human form, I am more powerful than Linley. I should have the chance to kill him."

Originally, Lyndin had wanted for the two of them to be in even closer proximity before making her move.

But Linley didn't give her the chance.

"Big brother Ley, I know that you are lying. Big brother Ley, I just want to ask you one last time. Are you willing to teach me stone sculpting?" Lyndin looked

at Linley with hopeful eyes.

Linley shook his head.

“Oh.” Lyndin lowered her head despondently.

But right at this moment, Lyndin suddenly charged at Linley, moving as fast as lightning, while from within Lyndin’s right hand, a dagger appeared.

Two meters. They were too close.

But then, a strange violet light flashed.

Lyndin only felt as though that violet sword flash flickered everywhere, changing positions constantly. It somehow wrapped around her dagger and her arm as well.

“Hrmph.”

Lyndin immediately dropped her dagger while slamming her left hand directly at Linley.

“Boom!”

Their two hands clashed against each other, and Lyndin hurriedly charged forward. But Linley moved in a strangely graceful way backwards, in the blink of an eye retreating to the corner of the wall.

“Growl.”

Haeru and Bebe were both standing by Linley’s side, but before Haeru and the others could attack, Lyndin immediately retreated.

“You want to kill me?” Linley stared coldly at Lyndin.

Raising her head high, Lyndin said angrily, “Ley, listen up. I, Danlan, have never begged anyone in my entire life like I did just now. Even when I’m with my master, I’ve never acted like this before. Three full days! I tried everything I could to beg you to teach me, but you refuse to do so. So what if I want to kill you now? Is there something wrong about that?”

“Such overbearing logic.” Linley looked at Lyndin.

Lyndin stood at the gate to Linley’s manor, staring angrily at him. “If you have the ability to do so, come and kill me. My fellow apprentices will be arriving

soon. If you dare bully me, I'll go tell them about it!"

Right now, Linley's desire to kill had already been aroused.

Regardless of whether this 'Danlan' girl was really the student of the Monolithic Sword Saint, or if she was not, she definitely had tried to kill him just then.

But Linley had this strange feeling of danger.

He couldn't clearly explain where it was coming from, but this feeling was warning him... do not pursue Danlan. If you do, it will be very dangerous.

"Hrmph, you don't have the guts to kill me, right? Then I'm leaving." Lyndin arrogantly pushed the door to the manor open, then began walking out. Linley didn't chase after her, only mentally sending out an order. "Bebe, go through the underground tunnels and take a look to see what is outside."

Right now, outside Linley's gate.

The other five experts of the ninth rank were all outside the gate. They had taken up their positions long ago, ready to join with Lyndin in the Angel Battle Formation at any time.

When Lyndin walked out of the courtyard, she used her eyes to signal the other five.

Those five quietly followed behind Lyndin, quickly departing.

"Hrmph." Exiting the hotel, Lyndin was very unhappy. "If just then, Linley had chased after me, the six of us could've killed Linley in the blink of an eye. But he kept hiding in his manor, with those two magical beasts beside him. Even if the six of us ran inside, given Linley's speed, he definitely would be able to flee.

Lyndin knew very well that killing Linley within the provincial capital was not a wise decision. After all, McKenzie was living in that nearby castle. Given McKenzie's speed, he could probably fly over here in the blink of an eye.

"Lord, what should we do?" The other five were looking at Lyndin.

"Execute the next strategy." Lyndin said coldly. "As for killing Linley in a suicide attack, that is an option of last resort, to be used only if we have no other choices." The other five nodded.

Even Angels wouldn't be willing to throw away their lives too easily.

"Hrm?" Lyndin suddenly saw a man and a woman being escorted by quite a few guards. Lyndin had seen pictures of Jenne and Keane before. "I hadn't gone to find them yet, but they actually delivered themselves to me?" Lyndin's lips began to curve up in a smile.

## A Change of Plans

Within the courtyard.

“Boss, just now, when I dug my way through the tunnels and went outside, I saw that five men left alongside that Danlan chick.” Bebe’s eyes were shining with an angry light. “That bad woman! She definitely had ill intentions.”

Linley laughed calmly. “No need to over-think things. That woman was almost certainly someone the Radiant Church sent to kill me. Just now, if I had chased out after her, most likely as soon as I stepped out of the gate, the people lying in ambush outside would’ve attacked at the same time and killed me. If she hadn’t already made up her mind to kill me long ago, why would she have arranged for people to lie in ambush? What’s more, I couldn’t sense those people at all.”

He hadn’t been able to detect the presences of those five men hiding outside. These five men were definitely experts, experts that were no weaker than he himself.

“Master, what should we do, then?” Haeru mentally transmitted.

With a thought, Linley summoned his adamantine heavy sword to his hands. “What should we do? We don’t need to mind them. When Jenne returns, I’ll immediately take her away from here. If they follow, I’ll kill them.”

As long as he wasn’t ambushed, after transforming into his Dragonform, with the adamantine heavy sword in hand, Linley was confident in dealing with even an early-stage Saint-level expert.

A short while later.

“Big brother Ley.” That familiar voice rang out.

“Enter.” Linley laughed as he stood up, casually pulling the gate open. Jenne and Keane walked in.

Keane looked at Linley, sighing. "Big brother Ley, my sis almost got taken advantage of this time. Fortunately, I was cautious and arranged people to surround and guard her room."

"Taken advantage of?" Linley looked at Jenne.

Jenne shook her head and laughed. "It's nothing. It's just that Albert, the first successor to the clan leader position. Tonight, he was planning to secretly enter my room. Fortunately, my little bro had taken some precautionary measures. That Albert was afraid of this situation getting out of hand as well. After all, there were many people inside the castle."

"That Albert has always had bad intentions towards you. I don't dare to be caught off-guard. Even if I stop being the city governor, so what? No matter what, I won't allow you to be taken advantage of by that bastard, sis," Keane said solemnly.

Somewhat moved, Jenne looked at her little brother.

Linley looked at Keane with praise in his eyes as well.

"Sis, in the future, when you are following big brother Ley, you have to take good care of yourself." Keane's eyes were starting to turn red. "But as long as you are with big brother Ley, I'm not too worried about you."

Lyndin was standing not too far away from the hotel, and had watched as Jenne and her younger brother had entered.

"Let's sit down nearby and take a rest for now." Lyndin pointed at the first floor of the hotel. "But while resting, we have to keep an eye on things outside. When Jenne and Keane head out, we'll immediately follow them."

The other five all nodded, and they followed Lyndin into the hotel.

But after one or two minutes, Albert brought around ten or so people into the hotel.

"Is this the place?" Albert asked one of his subordinates.

"Yes, young master. Miss Jenne entered this hotel." Hearing this, Albert nodded. "Go investigate for me and find out who the bastard is that Jenne likes."

As he spoke, Albert rubbed the wound on his face.

Last night, he really did cut quite the sorry figure.

He knew that Jenne was a magus of the third rank, but he himself was a warrior of the fourth rank. He was planning to slip in while she was asleep and rape her. That shouldn't have been too hard. So, late at night, he stealthily crept towards Jenne's room.

But who would've expected that Jenne's room had a female guard in it, and not just Jenne.

What's more, there were guards hidden outside the room as well.

He, the stately successor to the clan leader position of the Jacques clan, was soundly thrashed by that female guard. Fortunately, Jenne and the female guard knew who he was and so had not dared to kill him. At the time, Jenne had also told him to give up, because in the future, she was going to travel to the ends of the earth by the side of the man she loved.

"Could it be that she is going to go by the side of this mysterious warrior of the ninth rank and travel the world with him?" Albert's heart was filled with suppressed rage.

"Let's sit here for a while. We'll have some food and wait." Albert shouted.

Albert led his group of men into the Nile Hotel as well, into the main floor. But as soon as the fuming Albert entered the hotel, his eyes immediately lit up as he saw who was inside.

Albert stared fixedly at Lyndin.

"This beauty is as lovely as an angel." Albert sighed to himself.

Albert was quite choosy. He was already bored with ordinary beautiful girls. But Lyndin truly was astonishingly beautiful. Not only were her facial features exquisite, she also had that cold, holy aura about her.

Lyndin, no longer putting on an act, had totally returned to her usual temperament.

The holier and purer a woman seemed, the more Albert desired her. Albert felt extremely satisfied when he had a holy and pure woman beneath his thighs.

“Pretty lady, your humble servant is named Albert Jacques. Very happy to meet you,” Albert walked over, saying modestly.

Lyndin glanced at him, not paying him any attention.

“F\*ck off.” One of the golden-haired men next to Lyndin barked.

“You lookin’ to die?” The guard behind Albert immediately drew his weapon, staring coldly at the golden-haired man. This time, as he followed Jenne over, Albert had been very careful.

He knew that Jenne’s paramour was a warrior of the ninth rank, and thus everyone he brought today was an expert. One of them was a student of his great grandfather, a warrior of the ninth rank.

“Jacques?” Lyndin suddenly turned to look at him. She only now had paid attention to the lineage of the buffoon in front of her.

“Yes.” Albert smiled proudly.

One of Albert’s servants said arrogantly, “The young master of my clan is the successor to the clan leader position. Your group actually dares to be impolite to the young master?”

The Northwest Administrative Province was the domain of the Jacques clan. Albert was the successor to the clan leader position. Indeed, he had the right to act so overbearingly.

“Albert.” A middle-aged man standing behind Albert said softly, “None of those six, including that woman, are weak. It is very likely that they are all warriors of the eighth rank, and perhaps even of the ninth.”

Albert was startled.

At this moment, Lyndin rose to her feet, smiling. “Young master Albert, hello. I’ve come with my five fellow apprentices in search of a man we intend to kill.”

“Five fellow apprentices? Who is your master?” the middle-aged man behind Albert asked.

“The Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson,” Lyndin said.

The reason why Lyndin dared to make wild claims like this was primarily



because the Monolithic Sword Saint was a man who liked to roam all about the world. Thus, there were most likely very few people in the entire O'Brien Empire who knew exactly who the apprentices of the Monolithic Sword Saint were.

"The Monolithic Sword Saint?"

Everyone was shocked.

"Young master." A servant of Albert's came running over. "Young master, we have the information. The man whom Miss Jenne came here to meet registered under the name of 'Ley'."

"Ley?" Albert frowned.

"Never heard of him." Albert turned to look at the expert he had brought. "Uncle Slan, are you confident you can deal with him?" The middle-aged man frowned.

But hearing this, Lyndin's heart was suddenly swayed.

"Young master Albert, can it be that you have a grudge against that man named Ley?" Lyndin laughed.

Albert looked at her in surprise. "What of it?"

"My five fellow apprentices and I have come to deal with him." Lyndin smiled.

Albert was immediately excited. He really did hope to develop a closer relationship with this holy, pure beauty, and this was an excellent opportunity.

"Perhaps I will not only kill Ley and acquire Jenne, I will also acquire this beauty in front of me." Albert's heart began to quiver. Lyndin's beauty was not one whit inferior to Jenne's, and in fact she was even superior.

Albert smiled. "That is wonderful. Everyone will work together, then. What is your name?"

"I am called Danlan." Lyndin still used the same false name.

"Beautiful Lady Danlan, your master, Lord Haydson, has previously paid a visit to the Jacques clan before as well. At that time, he had spent a full month together with my great grandfather." Albert said, attempting to draw a closer

connection.

“Oh?” Lyndin seemed rather surprised.

“Indeed.” Albert then looked at the five men behind Lyndin. “Are your people confident in your ability to deal with Ley?”

“Do you not have faith in the disciples my master taught?” Lyndin said somewhat unhappily. That frown on Lyndin’s face when she was unhappy only made her look all the more mesmerizing. Albert could almost feel his heart twitching ferociously.

Just as Albert and Lyndin were chatting, the people keeping tabs on Jenne rushed in from the outside.

“Young master, bad news! That Ley took Miss Jenne with him and actually separated from young master Keane. And they just exited the courtyard. It seems they plan to leave.”

Albert immediately jumped to his feet.

Albert, Lyndin, and the others all stared at the outside through the window. Indeed, Jenne was following Linley on the street in a direction heading outside of the city.

As for Keane and the rest of his group, they were taking a different route. The two even waved farewell to each other.

“She’s leaving? Jenne is really leaving with this Ley?”

Lyndin’s face changed, and her mind became unsettled.

The strategy she had just come up with had just been ruined by Linley suddenly leaving with Jenne. She didn’t expect that Jenne would leave with Linley. After all, Jenne had been with Keane for all these years.

“Jenne is really going to leave with that bastard? It seems the two of them really do plan to wander the world together.” Albert fumed. “Men, attend me!”

“Don’t be hasty.” Lyndin’s eyes lit up, and she immediately interrupted him.

Albert looked questioningly at Lyndin. Lyndin, by now, knew that with Linley’s departure alongside Jenne, her previous plan was now useless.

But there was another way.

“Albert, send some people to follow them. Once they leave the city, we will ride horses after them. Outside the city... my fellow apprentices and I will kill him,” Lyndin said confidently.

Outside the city, most likely McKenzie would only be able to arrive after they had already killed Linley.

“Oh?” Albert was delighted. If he didn’t have to personally act, of course he would only be all the happier.

“How about this. After they leave the city, lead a squad of knights after them. Myself and my five fellow apprentices will join the squad, so Linley doesn’t notice us at first. When the time is right...” Lyndin laughed coldly.

When Linley was caught off-guard, the six of them would suddenly erupt from the squad and surround Linley, setting up the Angel Battle Formation.

In a short period of time, they would kill Linley.

Once the Angel Battle Formation was successfully set up, they had a virtually 100% chance of killing Linley. After all, when Angels set up the Angel Battle Formation, even if they didn’t go all out, they could still kill early-stage Saint-level experts. Once they did go all out and allow their bodies to collapse, even a middle-stage Saint-level expert might perish.

“No problem.” Albert patted his chest and guaranteed.

Lyndin and the other five were all smiles, while Albert was smiling radiantly as well.

Outside the city.

Jenne rode on the back of the black panther, while Linley was walking, as smooth and graceful as the wind. While walking, Linley chatted and laughed with Jenne.

Jenne’s face was radiant, filled with the light of true happiness. As long as she could often see Linley and chat with him, Jenne felt that she was already very happy and fortunate.

“Jenne, in a bit, please be careful,” Linley suddenly said.

“What?” Jenne was somewhat startled.

Linley said casually, “There’s a squad of knights chasing after us.” A hint of a murderous intent was in Linley’s eyes. This squad most likely had to do with the Radiant Church.

“It is about time to truly test the power of the Hundred Layered Waves anyhow.” Linley intentionally continued forward at their current pace, allowing the squad to have the chance to catch up.

## The Angel Battle Formation

It was deep into autumn already. The cold autumn wind howled across the land like icy blades as an elite squad of knights galloped forward.

“Faster, faster!”

With Albert dressed in simple armor leading the way, the group quickly galloped forward on the desolate road, with several dozen knights following behind Albert. By Albert’s side, there was a middle-aged man, the one and only expert of the ninth rank under Albert’s command.

As for Lyndin and the other five, they were also wearing ordinary knight’s armor and wearing gray knight’s helmets. Just from appearances, one wouldn’t be able to tell that Lyndin and the others were any different from the rest of the knights.

“Remember.” Lyndin said quietly to the five men with her. “When we catch up to Linley, once Albert gives the order to attack, each of you will split up and follow these knights to surround Linley. With Linley off-guard, we’ll execute the Angel Battle Formation. Remember, no matter what, don’t be too hasty with your attack. You absolutely must await my order.”

“Yes, Lord.”

The five all nodded.

A hint of a smile was on Lyndin’s lips. “Giddyup.”

The sound of hoof steps continued to ring out, and the squad kicked up clouds of dust in their wake. In the blink of an eye, they had travelled a great distance.

Linley had intentionally lowered his own speed to allow this group of people to catch up. Naturally, after just a short period of time at full gallop, Albert’s squad saw Linley’s figure.

“He’s right ahead.” Albert was very happy, and he immediately began to

shout, “Faster, faster!”

Those knights began to call out loudly as well, and they prodded their horses to gallop even faster. Within the thunder of their hoof steps, this group of knights quickly neared Linley.

“Remember, hang on to Haeru’s neck. Haeru will take you to my place first,” Linley instructed softly.

Jenne looked at Linley with concern. “Big brother Ley, what about you?”

“Don’t worry. I’ll just get rid of this bit of trouble.” At the same time, Linley glanced at his Blackcloud Panther, Haeru. Mentally, he ordered, “Haeru, you can go now. Remember, protect Jenne.”

“Growl.”

Haeru let out an arrogant growl, and then slowly began to speed up before suddenly transforming into a black blur, disappearing far away, without giving Albert’s men any chance to stop him.

“Clatter.” The group of knights completely blocked Linley’s forward path. They didn’t block the Blackcloud Panther from leaving, because they couldn’t block him. As for Lyndin and the others, they were capable of blocking the panther, but they were happy to see it leave.

After all, their target was Linley!

“Jenne!” Seeing this happen, Albert couldn’t help but grow angry.

Turning furiously towards Linley, Albert sneered, “Punk, you had your magical beast take Jenne away? Hrmph, let me tell you, Jenne is mine. As for you... let me send you off to the Netherworld. Haha... everyone, attack!” Albert pointed angrily at Linley.

With the clatter of hoof steps, the dozens of knights immediately surrounded Linley.

Linley just stood there in the middle, not caring in the slightest. Bebe only stood arrogantly on top of Linley’s shoulders, using his beady little eyes to stare disdainfully at the knights.

“My Cousin Jenne isn’t for the likes of you to touch. You should consider what

lowly status you have!” Albert said arrogantly. He had the feeling that everything was now under his control.

Linley only calmly glanced at the surrounding knights.

“I originally wanted to get rid of the Radiant Church’s forces. I didn’t expect that I would have attracted this group of useless fools.” Linley shook his head slowly. But right at that moment...

“Boss.” Bebe suddenly stared at the knights. “Danlan is there.”

“Danlan?” As though a bucket of cold water had been poured on Linley’s head, Linley shivered once. “The Radiant Church’s forces are with them?” Linley began to be cautious.

“I can smell her scent.” Bebe said confidently. “She thought that by putting on a helmet and some armor, that I, Bebe, wouldn’t be able to discover her?”

Linley still didn’t call forth any of his weapons.

There was no need to rush to using weapons.

When the weapons suddenly appeared from his interspatial ring at the critical moment, that would catch the opponents off-guard. Linley paid no heed to Albert, who was still arrogantly spouting his nonsense, and instead carefully paid attention to the surrounding knights.

“Charge! Kill him!” Albert ordered arrogantly.

But just at this moment, a cruel voice rang out as well. “Kill!” Suddenly, six rays of gleaming white light suddenly connected with each other. In terms of appearance, it was exactly the same technique as had been used by the six Special Executors to trap Linley.

That combined formation attack actually was the Angel Battle Formation.

But in terms of power, when actual Angels used this formation, it was far more powerful.

“Swish swish.” Those six rays of light, when connecting, pierced through the bodies of several of the knights that were in the way. Three of them died immediately, while eight were heavily injured.

“Aaah!”

One of the knights was pierced through the chest, leaving a small hole behind. This knight immediately toppled off his horse. He screamed twice, then fell silent.

“Haha, it’s been almost nine years. The Radiant Church hasn’t learned any new tricks.” Linley began to laugh loudly.

“What’s going on?” Albert was terrified.

The middle-aged man by Albert’s side was quite experienced. His face immediately changed, and he shouted, “Quick, leave! Those six are not the disciples of Haydson; they are from the Radiant Church, and they are all experts of the ninth rank. Leave! If you tarry, it’ll be too late!”

Albert was useless in most aspects, but his fleeing instinct was top notch.

“Giddyup, giddyup!” Albert no longer cared about killing Linley at this moment, as he hurriedly galloped away alongside that middle-aged man.

Some of the knights were trapped in the midst of that Angel Battle Formation. Terrified, some of them thought to try and flee out, but as soon as they ran into that white light, their bodies turned to ash, as though they had been burnt by an extremely high temperature flame.

“Hrm? It seems to be more powerful than that of those six Special Executors.” Linley sighed in praise.

“Flee.”

The remaining knights all fled at high speed, while those who did not had all been killed by Lyndin. In the entire desolate landscape, only Linley, Bebe, and Lyndin’s squad remained.

“Boom!”

The armor covering Lyndin and her men split apart as they returned to their normal appearances. One woman and five men. Lyndin’s group stared very confidently at Linley.

“Linley, aren’t you afraid?” Lyndin laughed coldly at Linley.



Linley glanced at Lyndin. “I must admit, your acting abilities are extremely formidable. You were able to successfully play the part of a headstrong young lady. However, you weren’t aware that eight years ago, at the City of Hess, I killed six Special Executors who also used this combination attack.”

“Crack, ripple...”

As Linley was speaking, those black draconic scales pierced through his clothes, while those cold, gleaming spikes erupted one at a time from his spine, his forehead, his elbows, and his knees. A long draconic tail sprouted from behind him as well.

Linley’s eyes had become that cold, remorseless dark gold color.

“Linley, we aren’t the same as those six,” Lyndin said calmly. “Today, you will definitely die.” As she spoke, the density of the light increased once more, seeming to even cover the sky above the area.

Linley’s dark golden eyes swept the six of them. In a cold voice, he said, “I have to tell you something. I... really dislike this formation attack.”

Linley still remembered that dream-like white glow.

“Grandpa Doebling.” Linley could clearly remember the scene when, eight years ago, Grandpa Doebling had sacrificed himself to kill those six Special Executors. From that day forth, Grandpa Doebling had forever vanished from the universe.

“Kill him,” Lyndin ordered coldly.

“Whoosh!” Lyndin’s group charged forward towards Linley, and that cage of light began to shrink at high speed. Anything and everything touched by that light was turned into dust.

It was utterly unblockable.

“Radiant Church. Haha...” Linley laughed coldly at the six attackers. Kicking off from the ground, he leapt towards one of the attackers.

“How sad.” Lyndin stared coldly at Linley's attempt to resist.

When joined forces, their defense was incredibly high. No one below the Saint level could harm them at all. They didn’t care about Linley’s attack at all.

“The first one!”

Linley’s voice suddenly rang out like a bolt of thunder, as from his hands, the adamantine heavy sword suddenly appeared. Transforming into a blur, the adamantine heavy sword slashed through the air, smashing against the body of one of the attackers.

“How laughable.”

The six of them didn’t care at all. That Angel of the ninth rank originally didn’t even bother dodging, but the strange thing was, Linley’s blow hadn’t caused the white light to activate and block it.

Profound Truths of the Earth – Hundred Layered Waves!

Linley’s dark golden eyes stared coldly at the man.

This Angel of the ninth rank only felt a very queer sensation, as though giant warhammers were suddenly smashing against his internal organs again and again. His light-style power was utterly useless against this sort of attack!

“Boom!” “Boom!” “Boom!” ...

Those strange attacks continue to reverberate in the Angel’s head as well as body.

“Ah!”

The ninth-ranked Angel slumped to the ground. The Angel Battle Formation, now lacking a person, had been destroyed, and the white light disappeared. Lyndin and the other four stared at this scene in astonishment. They couldn’t believe it.

Linley quirked his lips.

That white light had been light-style energy; in essence, it was the same as battle-qi. But the Profound Truths of the Earth which Linley used was an entirely different sort of attack. Whenever it encountered an obstacle, it would transmit through it, with only a bit of reduction in attack power. No obstacle could fully block it.

This so-called combination attack, before the Profound Truths of the Earth, was nothing but a joke.

Linley's full-power attack had disintegrated the internal organs of an Angel of the ninth rank in a single blow. He was dead as dead could be, and his soul vanished from the world.

"You... you killed him?" Lyndin and the other four were stunned.

The Angel Battle Formation had been broken, just like that.

"Formation attacks are useless against me." Linley's remorseless eyes swept them with his gaze. "That's one of you down. Now for the rest of you."

In the Yulan continent, anyone, including Saint-level experts, would die once their bodies were destroyed.

When these Angels who had descended into human bodies fought, even when they went all out, they weren't actually destroying their own bodies. They were just ignoring their bodies' ability to contain their power, in essence overloading them.

This sort of overloading technique would cause the body to slowly break down.

This sort of break down was gradual. Only after, say, thirty seconds, would the body have decayed to the point where the soul could no longer survive in it.

But since Linley reduced the Angel's internal organs into paste with a single blow, even if the Angel wanted to go all out at this point, it was too late.

"Lord?" The other four looked at Lyndin.

A holy light was suddenly shining from Lyndin's face. "Since this mortal has such an unusual attack, we no longer need to worry about our lives. Prepare to return to the embrace of the Lord."

"Yes, Lord."

Their eyes were very cold and calm. Their faces began to shine with holy light as well.

"Swish, swish..." A pair of illusion-like white wings suddenly sprouted from the backs of those four men. In the blink of an eye, those four 'ordinary' men each now were winged, and they flew into the sky.

Four humanoids with wings were flying in the air. Seeing this, Linley was shocked.

“Angels! They are Angels!”

One of the legendary, powerful races had just appeared in front of him. Even the weakest two-Winged Angels were terrifyingly powerful early-stage Saint-level experts.

“Kill.” Lyndin issued her order, not wasting any time at all.

This was because the bodies of these four were already beginning to emit blood, which was constantly flowing downwards. Clearly, their bodies were already starting to crumble, and their blood vessels were beginning to collapse. The early-stage Saint-level energy was beyond the capacity of these bodies.

They didn’t have much time.

They had to kill Linley as quickly as possible.

“Whoosh!” With a flap of their radiant wings, the four Angels transformed into four white blurs as they charged towards Linley.

## The Four-Winged Angel

Tonight, the moon was in the sky. The moon was very bright, covering the wilderness with its desolate glow.

And in this desolate wilderness, four white Angels were gliding down through the air coldly, like an illusionary mirage, drawing ever closer to Linley.

“What incredible speed.” Linley was surprised.

Right now, Linley’s offense was powerful, but his defense was weak. His offense was powerful enough to kill an early-stage Saint-level combatant. But his defense was poor; although he could take blows below the Saint level of power, he still couldn’t take blows from early-stage Saint-level combatants.

“Hrmph.” Linley launched himself off the ground. With the aid of the Supersonic spell, Linley agilely began to dodge. In terms of speed, however, Linley was still slightly slower than these four Angels.

“Shkreeeee!”

With an ear-piercing screech, a black blur suddenly appeared, moving even faster than those four Angels, colliding against the Angel nearest Linley.

“Die.” That Angel coldly smashed his fist against the black blur.

“Bam!” The fist, glowing with holy light, smashed viciously against the black blur. The black blur was knocked to the floor, but with a ricochet from the ground, it quickly charged up again.

“Swish!” Two fierce claws extended out, swiping viciously against the Angel.

One claw smashed against the Angel’s fist, while the other struck the Angel’s body. The Angel’s body was already at the point of collapse; struck by such a vicious claw, the body actually trembled, a layer of muscle being ripped open and blood pouring out.

“Bam!” Circling around once, the black blur smashed viciously against the Angel a second time.

This strike only hastened the collapse of the Angel’s body.

With a “boom” sound, the Angel’s body directly disintegrated. The white wings disappeared. Just like that, a Two-Winged Angel had died in battle.

Lyndin, who was watching the battle from behind, stared in astonishment at the black blur.

She could tell that the black blur was Linley’s pet, that adorable Shadowmouse. But by now, the Shadowmouse was already a meter long, no longer just that twenty-centimeter-long, hand-sized critter. And the black Shadowmouse was astonishingly fast... even faster than Two-Winged Angels.

Bebe was simply too astonishing.

“Six years ago, in the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, Bebe was roughly on par with Haeru in their battle. Six years later, Haeru hasn’t improved at all. He’s at his limit. But Bebe has continued to grow these six years... in terms of speed, Bebe is now far faster than Haeru. As for defense... perhaps even Barker, a Saint-level Undying Warrior when transformed, doesn’t have much higher defense than Bebe.” Linley knew exactly how formidable Bebe was.

Right now Bebe’s speed was simply too high.

Every day, Linley was absorbed in his bitter training. Bebe did nothing but eat, sleep, sleep, eat. And yet, the pace of his strength growth was faster than Linley’s.

One could tell how powerful Bebe had become just from looking at his transformation. From half a meter in the past to a meter long now.

“Squeeeeeeak,” Bebe let out an excited cry, while mentally transmitting, “Boss, let me handle these Two-Winged Angels. Their attacks can’t hurt me at all.”

Linley was speechless.

Two-Winged Angels, early-stage Saint rank. Couldn’t harm Bebe.

What sort of freakishly powerful magical beast was Bebe?!

The other three Two-Winged Angels, seeing how this black blur's lightning-fast claws had destroyed one of their comrades with two swipes, couldn't help but be filled with both shock and fury.

Not giving them the time to react, Bebe immediately charged towards another one of them.

"Ignore him. Kill Linley," Lyndin's cold voice rang out.

The three Angels paid no more attention to that terrifying black blur, charging towards Linley. But although they paid Bebe no heed, Bebe himself wouldn't let them off.

After all, Bebe was slightly faster than them.

"Whoosh." A black blur flashed by, with Bebe arriving next to one of the Angels.

Linley had run far away, as he was not confident in his ability to deal with the group attack of the Angels. Only in single combat was he confident of success. After all, Linley wasn't like Bebe, with his freakishly tough defense.

"Slash!"

Bebe opened his maw wide, chomping towards one of the Angels.

"Bam!" The Two-Winged Angel slammed his fists against Bebe, but Bebe actually wrapped his twin claws around the Angel's right fist, and then bit at it.

"Crunch!"

The right hand was bitten off.

Resisting the pain, the Two-Winged Angel smashed his left fist against the black Shadowmouse angrily. This attack carried with it virtually all of the power available to the Two-Winged Angel, and his left hand shone like the sun.

"Baaaam!" The left hand smashed against the black Shadowmouse, but at the same time, the black Shadowmouse thrust its claws fiercely against the Two-Winged Angel's chest.

Skin and flesh ripped open. Blood sprayed everywhere.

Bebe was smashed to the ground, but the Two-Winged Angel's body

trembled. The vessels in its body totally collapsed, and even its heart had imploded, unable to sustain that amount of power any longer. As blood leaked everywhere, the Two-Winged Angel collapsed from the skies.

Yet another Angel had fallen.

“Boss.” Bebe was looking anxiously at Linley.

“Bam!”

Linley was sent flying by a fist, but the Two-Winged Angel’s body shuddered, and then crumbled, falling from the skies. The last remaining Two-Winged Angel immediately chased after Linley.

“Boss!” Bebe’s speed reached its limit. With Linley constantly dodging as well, Bebe managed to interpose himself between Linley and the Angel, just before the Angel would have struck Linley again.

Bebe stared angrily at the Two-Winged Angel.

“Boss, you okay?” Bebe mentally transmitted.

“I’m fine. But if I took more of those blows, I wouldn’t be able to take it.” Linley wiped the blood away from the corner of his lips. Part of the scales around his chest were smashed apart, with blood leaking out from behind them.

Linley couldn’t help but be frightened.

Just then, the two Angels had pincer-attacked him. Linley was slightly slower than them to begin with. In the end, his only option was to block one attack with his own, while accepting the second blow.

“Still not fast enough. If I could match Bebe in terms of speed and defense, I wouldn’t have cut such a sorry state.” Linley sighed to himself.

Six years ago, Bebe was roughly as fast as he was, while Bebe’s defense was a level higher.

But six years later, Bebe’s speed was nearly double his own. In terms of defense, Bebe’s was multiple levels higher now. The most irritating thing was, Bebe remained at the ninth level. He had not reached the Saint level.



No wonder the Blackcloud Panther, Haeru, had submitted to him.

Haeru was a proud magical beast of the ninth rank with extremely high natural talent, but compared to Bebe, his so-called talent was far weaker.

Using his astonishing defense and speed, Bebe dealt with the final Two-Winged Angel. In the blink of an eye, the four Angels had all died. Their leader, Lyndin, remained in her human form, watching from afar.

“Boss, are Two-Winged Angels of the early-stage Saint-level? Why did I feel that they weren’t that powerful?” landing on the ground, Bebe mentally spoke to Linley.

Linley chuckled, casting a glance at Lyndin.

“Bebe, didn’t you notice that after they utilized their Angelic power, blood began to flow from their bodies? Clearly, their bodies couldn’t withstand that level of power. They weren’t truly early-stage Saint-levels; although they had the power, their bodies were still as weak as before.” Linley had immediately seen the truth of the matter.

Those bodies had been at the breaking point already. A few good blows to those bodies would cause them to totally collapse.

“What a powerful magical beast.”

Staring at Bebe, Lyndin said with surprise, “Linley, I only heard that you had a Shadowmouse, but it seems he isn’t a Shadowmouse. He seems more like the legendary ruler of the rat race...”

“What’s that?” Linley looked at Lyndin.

Linley had always been curious as to exactly what sort of magical beast Bebe was.

“The type of magical beast with the greatest defense and the highest speed... could he really be that type?” Lyndin had lived in the realm of the Radiant Sovereign for many years. As a Four-Winged Angel, she had seen many things.

There were quite a few magical beasts that would reach the Saint level upon becoming an adult.

But even amongst those, there were still a few extremely rare and

outstanding types of magical beasts. This was the first time Lyndin had seen any of the legendary rulers of the rat race.

“Boss, what’s this woman saying?” Bebe looked doubtfully at Linley.

“She’s saying you are a ruler amongst the rats.” Linley chuckled.

Even the likes of Doehring Cowart and the Holy Emperor didn’t know what kind of magical beast Bebe was, but it seemed as though this Lyndin had a bit of a clue. Only, from the sound of it, Lyndin was just guessing, and wasn’t certain.

“Linley, you should feel proud.”

Just now, Lyndin had only been briefly surprised by Bebe’s performance. But now, she had calmed down again. “For the sake of killing you, a Cherub, a Four-Winged Angel, is about to die alongside you.”

Lyndin’s entire body began to shine with white light, and then four white wings sprouted forth from Lyndin’s back, stretching and spreading out as Lyndin took to the skies.

A Cherub!

“Not good.” The look on Linley’s face changed. The more wings an Angel had, the more powerful they were, and as the number of wings increased, the power increased at a rapid geometrical rate.

“Boss, let me go!”

Bebe excitedly let out a sharp screech, then transformed into a blur as he charged towards the Cherub.

Lyndin smiled coldly. Her four wings fluttered slightly, and she suddenly transformed into a white blur. Her astonishing speed was actually not one whit inferior to that of Bebe’s.

“Boom!”

Lyndin’s fist, clad in holy light and appearing like white jade, smashed against Bebe. This time, Bebe was smashed down, flying into the ground like a meteor and even creating a deep crater in the ground. Bebe’s body had been smashed deep into the earth.

“Bebe.” Linley was shocked.

Linley had guessed at how powerful this Cherub was, but he didn’t expect the Cherub to be so terrifyingly strong.

“Bo—, Boss, I’m fine,” Bebe’s weak voice rang out in Linley’s mind. Linley could guess at how heavily injured Bebe currently was.

The power of a Cherub was far greater than that of a Two-Winged Angel.

“Linley. It is your turn.” Lyndin’s body was already beginning to be covered with blood, but Lyndin didn’t care about her collapsing body at all.

Lyndin knew that she had, at the very least, ten seconds of life left. These ten seconds were more than enough for her to kill Linley.

Those four white wings of light fluttered slightly, and then Lyndin transformed into a white blur. Linley couldn’t see her clearly, as she appeared almost like a mirage, suddenly appearing in front of him.

The only thing Linley could see were Lyndin’s cold, remorseless eyes, now silver in color.

"Time to go all out!"

“Ah!!!”

Linley launched himself off the ground, rapidly retreating while at the same time, the Bloodviolet Godsword appeared in his hand. He immediately activated that terrifying baleful aura hidden within Bloodviolet.

This terrifyingly baleful aura had influenced even the peak-stage Saint-level expert, Stehle, much less Lyndin.

Trembling slightly, that strange bloody light covered and began to flow on the surface of Bloodviolet.

That baleful aura entered Lyndin’s mind, attacking her soul.

“This...” A hint of fear suddenly appeared in Lyndin’s cold eyes. She only sensed that she seemed to have returned to that time when she was with the army of Angels engaging in warfare in other planes, and had suddenly encountered within the depths that terrifying demon. She still remembered

how that demon had easily butchered so many of the Angels. An entire army of hundreds of thousands of Angels had been butchered.

That full-power punch of hers, under the influence of Bloodviolet, began to grow weaker.

At the same time as he activated Bloodviolet, Linley fiercely swung his adamantine heavy sword forward, chopping mercilessly against Lyndin's body.

Profound Truths of the Earth – Hundred Layered Waves.

“Boom!” Linley was struck by Lyndin's fist as well, which had been reduced to roughly half-power. His black scales immediately split apart, and Linley's chest caved in as a large volume of blood poured out of Linley's mouth.

Like a ripped sandbag, Linley smashed against the ground, kicking up a huge cloud of dust.

Lyndin stood there disbelievingly.

“How could he possess such a terrifying baleful aura?” And then, Lyndin suddenly felt herself bound by the Laws of the universe. Her soul, not resisting in the slightest, was drawn forth by the Laws, disappearing from the plane of the Yulan continent.

As for Lyndin's corpse, it gently slumped down, fresh blood leaking from her mouth and nose.

## Saint-Level Dragonblood Warrior

The cold wind continued to blow.

The desolate wilderness had finally returned to its former calm. But compared to earlier, atop the wild plains, there were a number of corpses as well as pools of blood. The aftermath of the battle was easily visible. The ground was cracked open in many places, and there was that giant crater, with that deep hole in the center of it. At this moment, a black Shadowmouse slowly, wearily crawled out of that deep hole.

“Boss.” Bebe’s body was stained red, blood matting his fur.

Bebe was staring forward in concern. He saw that Linley was lying there, not moving at all. Although the Cherub, thanks to the influence of the Bloodviolet sword’s baleful aura, had seen its attack weakened, the force of its blow was still several times greater than that of the Two-Winged Angels.

Bebe scurried forward, arriving next to Linley.

“Boss, you okay?” Bebe mentally transmitted. Bebe was very worried. Right now, Linley’s chest had an astonishingly deep indentation, with over half of the scales on his chest shattered and fallen. Fresh blood had dyed Linley’s chest thoroughly red, and Linley’s face was very pale. His eyes were closed.

Slowly, Linley opened his eyes, looking at Bebe.

“I’m fine. Bebe. Don’t move my body,” Linley’s voice rang out in Bebe’s mind.

Bebe nodded obediently, settling into a curl near Linley’s body.

“This time, I was wounded very badly.” Linley felt that his chest was wracking him with severe pain with each breath he took. Linley’s only option was to urge the Dragonblood battle-qi in his vessels to help repair some of the damage he had taken, in accordance with the method prescribed in the ‘Secret Dragonblood Manual’. As a Supreme Warrior, his recuperative abilities were

quite formidable.

But this time, the injury really was very severe.

The Dragonblood battle-qi slowly flowed through each part of his body, as the unique energy of the dragonblood in his veins slowly seeped into his blood vessels and heart. As for his chest, which had suffered the majority of the damage this time, after it drew some of the special energy from his Dragonblood, Linley could feel it slowly begin to recover. With each breath, Linley could feel his chest slowly changing.

“In terms of regenerative speed, amongst the Four Supreme Warriors, the Dragonblood Warriors should be inferior to the Violetflame Warriors and the Undying Warriors.” In a time like this, this thought suddenly crossed Linley’s mind.

The Violetflame Warriors possessed incredibly strong regenerative abilities, and even had that freakishly powerful Nirvana Rebirth ability.

Unless their bodies were entirely destroyed, given enough time, a Violetflame Warrior would be able to recover to their peak condition.

“Huff.” “Puff.”

The sound of Linley’s breathing grew louder and louder, as his damaged chest continued to recuperate. At the same time, the black scales covering Linley’s body retracted, as did his spikes and his tail. In the blink of an eye, Linley returned to his normal human form. But despite now being in human form, Linley’s body was still covered in blood, and the injury to his chest was as severe as ever.

As time passed, the night began to deepen.

The cold wind blew drearily. The light of the moon was completely blocked by the clouds. But Linley and Bebe paid no heed to the weather at all.

“Boss, doing better?” Bebe’s beady little eyes stared unwaveringly at Linley.

“My internal injuries are more or less fixed. Only, three of my ribs are broken. Fortunately, they didn’t pierce into any other vital regions.” Linley revealed a smile towards Bebe. “However, it will take at least ten days or half a month for

broken ribs to recover.” Normal people would need several months to heal a broken rib. Linley was only able to make this claim because of his confidence in his lineage as a Dragonblood Warrior.

Bebe nodded.

“But if I were able to find a light-style or a water-style magus, I should be able to recover even more quickly.” Linley knew that certain types of magical healing could be extremely powerful.

When Linley had been imprisoned within the Radiant Temple, virtually every single bone in his body had been broken. But when he had been bathed in that holy light of the Radiant Sovereign, his body completely healed in the blink of an eye, and was restored to peak condition. This sort of astonishing recuperative ability was very formidable.

Linley continued to generate his Dragonblood battle-qi.

The Dragonblood battle-qi absorbed the elemental essence from nature, and it also absorbed the unique Dragonblood lineage in Linley’s veins. As it gradually strengthened, it nourished every part of Linley’s body. Linley’s internal injuries were now almost completely healed. The only tricky part remaining was his shattered ribs.

“Hrm?”

Linley’s eyebrows shot up, and he felt a hint of delight.

The Dragonblood battle-qi circulating throughout his body suddenly began to tremble, and the liquefied Dragonblood battle-qi in his dantian suddenly roiled about like the waves of the sea. Linley immediately guided all of the Dragonblood battle-qi in his veins into his lower dantian. Very soon... the density of Dragonblood battle-qi in his lower dantian reached its maximum peak.

“Rumble...”

A radiant smile blossomed on Linley’s face as he sensed the Dragonblood battle-qi in his dantian begin to transform.

Every single shred of battle-qi was changing. Changing in quality and nature.

“I’m finally beginning to break through,” Linley calmly waited. At first, only a small amount of Dragonblood battle-qi had been transformed, but as time went on, more and more transformed, and at a faster and faster rate. At the end, in the space of time it would take a person to breathe ten times, the remaining half of the battle-qi all transformed successfully.

“Haha...”

Linley rose to his feet, dispersing the totally transformed Dragonblood battle-qi in his veins to every part of his body. Some of it was sent to his shattered ribs, assisting them to recover more rapidly.

“Boss?” Bebe looked at Linley with curiosity.

Linley hugged Bebe, lifting him into the air. Laughing, he said, “I’m fine. Let’s prepare to go home.”

At this time, Linley was extremely happy. Ever since he had reached the peak of the eighth rank, he had been waiting for this day. Although in the past month, Linley had the feeling that he could break through at any moment, that moment somehow just wouldn’t come. But now, while he had been healing his injuries, he had suddenly broken through.

The ninth rank!

From this day forward, Linley was a warrior of the ninth rank... but that was just his nominal level of power. In reality, after Dragonforming, Linley was already an early-stage Saint-level combatant. In terms of defense, speed, or power, he had dramatically grown.

“If I were to encounter that Four-Winged Angel again, just by using the adamantine heavy sword, I would be able to dispose of her.” Linley was very excited.

The Saint level!

That was a brand new level of existence. Even the mighty Dawson Conglomerate desperately desired to have a Saint-level warrior amongst their ranks. The mighty Jacques clan was mighty, precisely because they had a single Saint-level combatant. This was their pride and the source of their arrogance. This was why they had the confidence and the ability to administer the O’Brien



Empire's Northwest Administrative Province in perpetuity.

An expert of the Saint level.

Before a Saint-level combatant, even the Grand Dukes and Kings who administered and ruled over populations of millions or tens of millions meant nothing at all.

Before a Saint-level combatant, even an ancient clan that had existed for thousands of years would have to lower their noble heads.

Even the Radiant Church, the Cult of Shadows, and the Four Great Empires would deeply desire to pull Saint-level combatants into their orbit!

In the entire Yulan continent, aside from those three humans who stood at the peak of the world—the High Priest, the War God, and the King of Killers—or the two deity-level Kings of magical beasts, Saint-level combatants were the cream of the crop. Upon entering the Saint level, one would immediately possess an unlimited life. The King of Killers, Cesar, had lived for five thousand years as a Saint-level, had he not?

“The Saint level!”

Linley raised his head to the sky.

Suddenly, flakes of snow began to drift down from the heavens, melting when they touched Linley's face.

“I still remember those two Saint-level experts doing battle in the town of Wushan when I was a child. At that time, Saint-level combatants were unfathomably high entities, far beyond the likes of me. Even that magus of the eighth rank who rode on a Velocidragon was an expert. But now?” A sense of pride swelled up in Linley's heart.

At last, he had accomplished something.

Most likely, if the current Linley were to encounter the Stellar Sword Saint, Dillon, he would be able to defeat him.

“Ancestors of the Baruch clan, keep watching me. I will restore the fame and the legend of the Dragonblood Warriors, and spread it across the continent.” Linley felt a sense of absolute self-confidence.

Linley was only twenty-six years old, this year. But upon Dragonforming, he was a Saint-level warrior.

“There will come a day when I reach an even higher peak of power.” A hint of a smile was on Linley’s face.

Linley knew exactly how powerful he was. Although he was only an early-stage Saint-level after Dragonforming, the hardest part of advancing from the early-stage to the peak-stage of the Saint level was not in accumulating battle-qi. Rather, it was in gaining a deeper level of understanding and insight regarding the world. But Linley’s level of understanding was already at that of a peak-stage Saint-level.

In truth, sometimes two people who had the same amount of battle-qi and similarly deep levels of understanding would still have major differences in their power.

This was because different people would walk different paths to wisdom, even if they were in the same realm.

For example, another combatant might also be training in the Laws of the Earth, but after the ‘impose’ level, he might have taken a totally different route. After all, the Laws of the Earth were as boundless and infinite as the oceans, and there were many paths one could take in understanding them. Different paths would result in different results. Linley’s path was akin to the throbbing pulse of the earth itself, using those strange vibrational attacks. It was entirely different from the usual types of force and power based attacks used within the Yulan continent.

Just as Linley was preparing to head back to Cloudpeaks Village, suddenly...

“Linley, right?” a voice rang out from not too far behind him.

Linley’s heart jumped in fright. He hadn’t noticed that there was someone nearby. He immediately turned his head to look, only to see a black-robed, skinny old man with a few flecks of white in his hair, standing in mid-air. The old man was staring down at Linley from mid-air.

Linley immediately understood. “McKenzie?”

“Right.” This person was indeed McKenzie.

Linley had just suffered a serious wound, and had been focusing on healing himself. He had totally forgotten that this major battle he had just fought against those six Angels definitely would not escape the attention of the nearby Saint-level combatant, McKenzie, who was residing in the provincial capital.

Linley carefully looked at McKenzie. McKenzie looked as though he were in his early fifties. Although his hair had a few streaks of white, there wasn't a single wrinkle on his face. He stood in mid-air with his waist ramrod straight, with an immovable aura that made Linley feel secretly amazed. This McKenzie was definitely more powerful than that Four-Winged Cherub.

"How long have you been here?" Linley asked.

McKenzie laughed. "Not too long. When I arrived, I managed to witness you and the Four-Winged Cherub exchanging your final blows to each other and injuring each other."

Linley raised an eyebrow.

This McKenzie should have been watching the entire time as Linley had been healing himself. Since he didn't act against Linley when Linley was injured, he probably didn't have any ill intentions towards Linley.

"I am very surprised that you actually managed to kill a Cherub." McKenzie sighed in appreciation. "Although the Four-Winged Angels are only temporarily able to use their full strength, for you to be able to kill one without dying is quite amazing. Dragonblood Warriors... the legendary Dragonblood Warriors really are powerful. Linley, after Dragonforming, you should be at the Saint level, I believe. Only, given how difficult it was for you to kill a Cherub, you should only be an early-stage Saint-level warrior, right?"

Linley started, not knowing whether he should laugh or cry.

"This McKenzie... jeeze..." Linley was speechless. He thought to himself, "Only after I killed the Four-Winged Angel did I gain the ability to reach the Saint level in Dragonform. This McKenzie actually thinks that I had already reached the Saint level when I was fighting with the Cherub."

"What, you haven't reached the Saint level?" McKenzie said disbelievingly.

Linley smiled. "I admit that after Dragonforming, I am indeed at the early-

stage Saint-level.”

McKenzie laughed and nodded with satisfaction. “Haha, it’s been a long time since I’ve seen a Saint-level combatant. I really am quite happy to see you today. How about this. Come with me to my residence for a time. That way, the two of us can spar a bit. I’m sure that this will definitely help both of us improve our abilities. Don’t worry, I won’t go full force; this is just a sparring match.”

Seeing that Linley suffered serious injuries while killing a Four-Winged Angel, McKenzie believed Linley was not truly a match for him.

“McKenzie, my Dragonform is indeed at the Saint level. However...” Linley looked confidently at McKenzie. “I just broke through to that level now, after the battle. When I was fighting against the Cherub, I hadn’t broken through yet.” Right now, as far as Linley was concerned, although he wasn’t confident in his ability to deal with peak-stage Saint-level experts, he was still confident in dealing with people at McKenzie’s level.

Having reached the Saint level, there was no longer a need for him to conceal himself or hide his power.

“What? You broke through just now?” McKenzie was shocked to hear this.

## An Appointment

McKenzie's view of Linley had totally changed.

"Haha..." After being silent for a moment, McKenzie laughed loudly. He descended from the skies, slowly walking towards Linley, his attitude noticeably more warm and friendly. "Linley, the legendary genius magus, supposedly the second greatest genius in history. But in my opinion, your talent as a warrior is even greater than as a magus. To be so young and yet already have the power of the Saint level... the Dragonblood Warriors truly are Supreme Warriors."

Linley had always been proud of his clan's heritage. But whenever he thought back to how his clan had all but been destroyed, with only himself and his younger brother remaining, he couldn't help but feel a thread of grief in his heart.

"Mr. McKenzie, is there anything else? If there isn't, I need to go back now," Linley said.

McKenzie hurriedly said, "My friend Linley, this is our first meeting. Why don't we have a nice get-together? I'm very curious about you legendary Dragonblood Warriors as well. If there's enough time, I truly do wish to have a sparring contest against you, Linley. After all, sparring against experts of the same level is one of the best ways a Saint-level combatant can improve." As he finished speaking, McKenzie looked very earnestly at Linley.

Spar?

McKenzie was the local hegemon of the Northwest Administrative Province. Being able to get on good terms with McKenzie was of benefit to him. And in addition, Keane belonged to the Northwest Administrative Province as well. This could be considered helping Keane out as well.

Considering for a moment, Linley nodded. "I'm still wounded. Even if I did go to your residence, I wouldn't be able to immediately spar with you. How about

this? I'll go home first, but after a period of time, I'll come back and pay a visit to you. It won't be too long, a month or so at most."

McKenzie happily nodded. "Wonderful. Then I will await your arrival within the Jacques clan's castle."

"I'll definitely come."

Linley smiled and nodded.

It had begun to snow, and snowflakes were flying everywhere. McKenzie and Linley, these two Saint-level combatants, smiled at each other, then flew off in different directions.

In the vast wilderness, only Linley and Bebe were left present.

"The winter's snow." Seeing the endless snowfall, Linley suddenly thought back to that huge blizzard that winter when he was young and in love with Alice.

The next year, also on a day of a blizzard, Linley and Alice had separated.

And then, within the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, on another snowy day, Linley had come to understand the 'impose' level.

Now, on a fourth blizzard, tonight, Linley had broken through to the ninth rank as a warrior, with his true power now fully within the realm of the Saint-levels.

"Snow..."

Linley felt extremely moved. But when he lowered his head and looked at himself, his smile disappeared. Astonished, he said, "I chatted with a Saint-level combatant for such a long time, looking like this?"

Because of his transformation and his battle against the Angels, Linley's clothes and pants had been turned utterly ruined.

The way he currently looked, even beggars would probably feel sorry for him.

However, just now, McKenzie hadn't paid any attention to his attire. In truth, when many Saint-level combatants engaged in training, they would sometimes train for months at a time. It was normal for their bodies to become incredibly

filthy. Thus, they didn't care too much about superficial appearances. What they cared about was what a person was like inside.

For example, although Linley's clothes were in absolutely wretched shape, no one would dare look down upon him as he stood there.

This was a person's aura and demeanor.

"Boss, you said you have reached the Saint level? Transform and let me admire my Boss's magnificence." Bebe's beady little eyes stared at Linley as he intentionally said those flattering words.

An excited feeling entered Linley's heart.

That was not a bad idea at all.

"Fine," Linley said with a laugh. Bebe immediately leapt off of Linley's shoulders as once again, those black scales emerged from Linley's skin. Sharp spikes erupted from his forehead, knees, and elbows, while his eyes once more transformed into that dark golden color.

He looked exactly the same as he had before.

But Linley could feel the difference.

"Whoosh." Linley felt the unique energy of the exalted dragonblood hiding in his veins begin to flow into his bones, his muscles, and even his armor, spikes, and draconic tail.

The originally pitch-black scales were actually beginning to shine with a hint of blue light.

"What a feeling of power."

Linley could feel that his vision and his hearing had suddenly increased dozens of times in sensitivity. Nothing within several kilometers of him could escape his notice.

"Such powerful strength. Such powerful battle-qi."

Linley balled his fist, and the air itself shuddered once. His mighty muscles now contained far greater power than before, and the amount of battle-qi in his body had vastly grown.

“Haha...” Linley began to laugh excitedly.

Late at night. Linley was flying across the desolate landscape. He, a fully transformed Dragonblood Warrior, looked like a monster as he floated through the air, occasionally letting out overjoyed bouts of wild laughter.

His laughter echoed in the heavens and in the earth.

“No wonder Barker was so excited when he reached the Saint level. I didn’t expect that my power would increase this much after reaching this level.” Linley was extremely excited as well.

Dragonblood Warriors had many innate gifts. Once their power reached a certain level, they would naturally be able to fly. This was like the flight which flying magical beasts innately possessed; it was a natural ability that didn’t require any particular understanding or insights.

“In terms of mysteriousness and exaltedness, the bloodline of the Armored Razorback Wurm is far inferior to the lineage of us Dragonblood Warriors.” Flying high in the air, Linley felt a sense of awe.

Originally, Linley had drunk a large amount of dragon’s blood as well as eaten the draconic crystal of the Armored Razorback Wurm. But despite that, the dragonblood in Linley’s vein had been able to dissolve and absorb it all.

And now, upon entering the Saint level, Linley could sense that the energy of the dragonblood heritage in his veins was continuing to transform and strengthen various functions in his body.

“My speed has doubled, at least.” With but a thought, Linley suddenly transformed into a blur as he streaked across the sky.

“As for defenses...” Linley looked at his now perfect, undamaged scales, paying special attention to that dim layer of blue light. “If I were to take another blow from that Four-Winged Angel, I would at most suffer some light wound.”

Linley’s lips curved upwards.

Confidence!

Unmatchable confidence!

Actually, most human Saint-level experts had very weak defense. Even



experts of the peak-stage Saint-rank had far inferior defense compared to Saint-level magical beasts.

But the Four Supreme Warriors possessed talents and gifts that were even more freakishly powerful than that of magical beasts.

This was one of the reasons why, as soon as a Dragonblood Warrior reached the Saint level in human form, they would immediately be at the peak-stage of the Saint level in power after Dragonforming. They were invincible. Understanding and insight made no difference.

Even just by relying on raw force, they were an invincible force amongst Saint-levels.

This was their natural talent!

Much like how Haeru was jealous of how powerful Bebe had become, the Four Supreme Warriors were worthy of admiration and jealousy from any race in the entire Yulan continent.

“Boss.” Bebe leaped up into the air.

Linley stretched his arm out, catching Bebe in mid-air, and Bebe jumped onto Linley’s shoulders. Linley was now covered totally with dark scales, while on his shoulders there was a black Shadowmouse.

It really was quite a matching sight.

“Bebe, time for you to experience the flight speed of a true Saint-level expert.” Linley laughed loudly, then exerted himself to his utmost, transforming into a black blur as he streaked across the skies, disappearing into the horizon.

The snow continued to fall across the night-shrouded wilderness.

Only the corpses on the ground gave testament to the battle that had been fought here.

The straight-line flying speed of a Saint-level was extremely fast. In an hour, Linley was able to cross over a thousand kilometers. In a very short period of time, Linley saw Cloudpeaks Village up ahead.

Tonight, the snow-covered Cloudpeaks Village was very quiet.

Linley flew directly to the western side of the village, dropping down at high speed like a meteor as he landed into the middle of the courtyard.

“Who comes!” A low roar as several shadows flashed out.

Linley had been flying so fast that he had been creating sonic booms. Naturally, he attracted the attention of experts such as the Barker brothers. But once they saw that the person in front of them was the Dragonformed Linley, they all secretly sighed.

“Hrm, you entered without even opening the door?” the fifth brother, Gates, said in astonishment, then he stared at Linley. “Lord, could it be that...?”

Laughing, Linley glanced at Gates.

Gates was the most intelligent and mentally agile of the five brothers, and was the first one to grasp the concept of ‘wielding something heavy as though it were light.’

“Ah! Saint-level!” The others now realized as well, and the five brothers stared at Linley in astonishment.

“Big brother Ley returned?” Jenne’s voice rang out, as she ran out as well. But as she saw Linley’s transformed appearance, she was so scared that she immediately screamed, “Monster!”

Rebecca and Leena, who shared the room with her, quickly consoled her.

“Jenne, that’s big brother Linley. That’s his Dragonblood Warrior transformation.” Rebecca laughed.

Linley returned to his normal human form. Badly frightened just now, Jenne stared stupidly at the transformation, then looked at Rebecca. “Dragonblood Warrior? What’s a Dragonblood Warrior?”

“Haha, Dragonblood Warriors are one of the Four Supreme Warriors. We five brothers are also Supreme Warriors. We are the Undying Warriors!” Gates said arrogantly.

Jenne looked at the surrounding group of people.

When she had arrived here tonight with Haeru, she temporarily took up residence with Rebecca and Leena. But when Rebecca and Leena were

introducing everyone to her, they had only gotten around to introducing Zassler.

Jenne hadn't even finished getting over her amazement at hearing that Zassler was an Arch Magus necromancer before, suddenly, this 'Dragonblood Warrior' and these 'Undying Warrior' concepts popped up as well.

"This... you all are..." Jenne's mind was in chaos.

"Jenne, go back and get some rest," Linley laughed as he spoke.

Barker and his brothers were all stunned by Linley's breakthrough. The second brother, Ankh, laughed helplessly. "Lord, you broke through at such speed. Big brother Barker has reached the Saint level as well, but still wasn't your match. Now... the difference between us has increased even more."

"If he wasn't powerful, would he be our Lord, and lead us against the Radiant Church to seek vengeance?" Gates said arrogantly.

"All of you are close to having the power of the Saint level." Zassler's face had a smile on it. "Fortunately, this old fogey has finally gained some certain insights. I trust that within ten years, I should be able to break through and reach the Saint level."

Ten years?

Zassler was over eight hundred years old. To him, ten years was a fairly short period of time.

"A Grand Magus necromancer? That is an incredibly terrifying idea." Linley's eyes shone. "By that time, you'll be able to summon Saint-level undead, and lead an army of millions of undead!"

An Arch Magus necromancer of the ninth rank was already very frightening.

But a Grand Magus necromancer was as terrifying as an entire Empire, all by himself.

"Haha, everyone, keep growing stronger. F\*ck, does the Radiant Church still dare send people over? If they send one, we'll kill one. If they send ten, we'll kill ten. Then we'll let Zassler create undead slaves out of their corpses and use them to counter-attack." As Gates spoke, he grew excited over his idea.

Everyone was very happy. Their strength increasing meant that they were now becoming more qualified to fight head on against the Radiant Church.

Linley was very happy as well.

Raising his head towards the sky, watching the snow drift about, Linley then turned his gaze to everyone present. "Alright, there's a blizzard tonight. Everyone should go inside the main hall if we want to chat."

"Right! Tonight, we won't stop until we are all drunk." Even the reliable and steady Barker was roaring loudly in his happiness.

The party went on for half the night. In truth, whether or not they would be able to fight against the Radiant Church depended entirely on their power. The reason Linley was their leader was because he was the most powerful amongst them.

Time passed. In the blink of an eye, three days had gone by.

Jenne had grown to fully understand everyone's background, and she slowly came to accept it all. Only now did Jenne truly understand that to these people, the city governor of a prefectural city was nothing at all.

In fact, not just a prefectural city; even the mighty Jacques clan, the rulers of the Northwest Administrative Province, didn't trouble Linley's group. They only viewed the Jacques clan as equals, and that was only because of the existence of McKenzie.

"Barker, his brothers, and big brother Linley are all so hard working." Rebecca, Leena, and Jenne, these three beautiful ladies, were chatting amongst themselves while carrying baskets through the manor.

But just as they entered the courtyard, they suddenly saw...

The Shadowmouse, Bebe, floating in mid-air. Seeing Jenne and the others, he winked flirtatiously towards the three of them. Bebe opened his mouth, and out of it came crisp, clear human speech.

"Wow, three pretty girls. Hello, ladies!"

## Wharton

The imperial capital of the O'Brien Empire. Channe. In the entire Yulan continent, perhaps only the capital of the Yulan Empire could match Channe in terms of size.

As for the name 'Channe', the War God O'Brien himself had chosen this name.

The imperial capital, Channe. There were millions of residents living here.

As a capital with over five thousand years of history, Channe had many ancient clans. In a place such as the imperial capital of Channe, even experts of the ninth rank were quite common. No one dared to act rashly in the imperial capital, because there were far too many powerful clans here.

But of course, the number one power of the imperial capital of Channe was, without a doubt, the War God's College.

Although the personally taught disciples of the War God virtually never showed their faces, even the weakest of the honorary disciples were at least warriors of the eighth rank, while most were warriors of the ninth rank. From this, one could tell how astonishingly powerful the War God's College was. And of course, there was the master of the War God's College. The War God himself.

It must be understood that in the O'Brien Empire, all other religions were outlawed. Even the commoners prayed to the War God. The War God had become the object of their faith!

From this, one could tell how important the War God was in the hearts of the commoners.

The east part of the imperial capital of Channe was a place covered with palaces and noble residences, with the imperial palace located within the east city as well. Within East Channe there was a street named Boulder Street, and

on each side of Boulder Street there were meticulously constructed manors. These were all built by the order of the imperial clan of the Empire, and were given as rewards to the nobles and government officials who had rendered great deeds unto the Empire.

One of the manors on Boulder Street was the residence of the newest rising star of the Empire, Count Wharton. Two sturdy guards stood at each side of the gate to his residence, their waists stiff. And right now, within the main hall of the manor, there were four people.

All four of them were standing, but one of them was pacing about, a hint of a frown appearing on his brows.

He seemed to be roughly twenty-one or twenty-two years old. He wore a simple warrior's outfit, with the sleeveless top revealing his bulging muscles. He had a straight nose, thick black eyebrows, and a blocky, angular face, making him look very courageous and fierce.

But the most astonishing thing about him was his body.

He had the astonishing height of 2.2 meters. He had massively broad shoulders, a comparatively narrow waist, and two toned, powerful legs.

"Just by looks, Wharton does seem to be more astonishing than Linley," Hillman said to himself.

Compared to Wharton, Linley appeared to be more reserved and understated.

"Young master Wharton, are you still worrying about the Seventh Princess?" Housekeeper Hiri, his nose red from drinking wine, began to chortle. Wharton turned to look at him helplessly. "Grandpa Hiri, you know who those people chasing after Nina are."

The other young man in the group of four laughed. "Young master Wharton, why has a bold, forthright man such as yourself become so squeamish and nervous when it comes to matters of love? Why don't you just go with her to meet with His Imperial Majesty? Isn't that simple?"

"Just go directly?" Wharton raised an eyebrow.

Hillman encouraged as well, “Nader is right. You are already a warrior of the eighth rank, and the scion of the Dragonblood Warrior clan. His Imperial Majesty surely knows that for a scion of the Dragonblood Warrior clan to reach the eighth rank means that he definitely has been able to train in Dragonblood battle-qi, and has the ability to transform.”

As Hillman saw it, for someone to reach the eighth rank without training in battle-qi was virtually impossible.

But Hillman had no idea that right now, by Linley’s side, there were five brothers who had reached the eighth rank just based on physical training.

“Wharton, as a Dragonblood Warrior, you are a fit and qualified match to wed the Seventh Princess. I trust His Imperial Majesty will agree,” Housekeeper Hiri laughed as he spoke. “But as for asking for her hand, I think it might be better if you let the Seventh Princess to sound His Imperial Majesty out first. That way, you’ll have a better idea going in.”

Housekeeper Hiri and Hillman glanced at each other, then both of them began to laugh.

In the past year or two, the relationship between Wharton and the Seventh Princess of the Empire had become quite well known throughout the entire imperial capital. Only, the other young nobles of the imperial capital had refused to give up. What’s more, two of them were quite competitive.

“Enough of that for now.” Wharton shook his head.

He trusted the Seventh Princess. The Seventh Princess had already told him long ago that aside from him, she wouldn’t marry anyone else. But Wharton also knew that the marriage of an imperial princess of the Empire was not up to her alone to decide. In addition, Wharton didn’t want the Seventh Princess to be too frustrated and unhappy. If he could openly wed her, that would be for the best.

“Oh, right. Grandpa Hiri, any news of my big brother?” Wharton asked.

Housekeeper Hiri nodded. “The Dawson Conglomerate has sent word that your big brother remains hidden in seclusion, where he continues to train. There’s no special news.”

“Big brother is as hard working as ever.” In his heart, Wharton admired Linley very much.

Many of the weighty responsibilities of the Dragonblood Warrior clan, such as the reclaiming of their ancestral heirloom, or the avenging their parent’s deaths, had been shouldered by Linley alone. As for him, Wharton, he could remain here in the imperial capital and quietly train.

Even from afar, Linley continued to shield him from the wind and the rain.

“Big brother...” Wharton still remembered how when he was young, when those two Saint-level combatants were doing battle outside the town of Wushan, those boulders had rained down densely from the skies. His big brother had ignored his own safety to cover Wharton with his own body.

Wharton could clearly remember that dangerous moment...

“Get down!” Linley had angrily shouted at Wharton, while charging towards him with no regard for his own safety. Linley had used his own weak, frail body to shield Wharton.

After leaving home at the age of six, Wharton was now twenty-two years old. In another month, he would be twenty-three.

It had been almost seventeen years.

He hadn’t seen his sibling in seventeen years.

“Young master Wharton, don’t worry too much. Young master Linley will come find you once his training reaches a certain level. After all, he knows exactly where you are living,” Housekeeper Hiri said consolingly.

Wharton nodded, then chuckled at himself. “When big brother sees me, I wonder if he’ll still recognize me.”

“The little six-year-old kid has changed quite a bit. Haha... it’s true that your big brother might not recognize you.” Hillman began to laugh.

Nader nodded as well. “When I came along with my father from the Holy Union, I initially couldn’t recognize you either, young master Wharton. It was only after I saw Housekeeper Hiri did I realize that this big fellow who was even taller than me was actually that little kid I used to know.”



“Nader, you punk.” Wharton glared at him.

Nader was Hillman’s son. However, Nader didn’t have much talent as a warrior; although he was already twenty-five years old, Nader was only a warrior of the fourth rank. But Nader was extremely discreet and careful, and so, alongside his father Hillman, he managed and oversaw the work of all the guards of the manor.

“Whoah, it’s getting late.” Wharton took out a pocket watch and cast it a glance. “Grandpa Hiri, Uncle Hillman, I need to head out.”

“He must be meeting up with the Seventh Princess again.” Nader snickered, intentionally putting a smirk on his face.

Wharton laughed confidently towards Nader. “Naturally. What, are you jealous?” As he spoke, Wharton chortled as he walked out of the manor.

Watching Wharton leave, Housekeeper Hiri felt very moved.

“When we came, young master Wharton was just a child. But now, he’s all grown up. I have fulfilled the task Lord Hogg gave me.” When he thought of Hogg, Hiri couldn’t stop sighing.

“The Baruch clan has been slumbering for many years. But now, it has finally begun to awaken. In another ten years, most likely the entire Yulan continent will once again be filled with people discussing the legendary Dragonblood Warriors,” Hillman said confidently.

Carrying the warblade ‘Slaughterer’, Wharton rode on a Saber-Toothed Tiger on the streets. Saber-Toothed Tigers were magical beasts of the eighth rank, and thus their aura would make ordinary magical beasts cower away from it. What’s more, Wharton was so physically huge himself. Together, they posed such a terrifying sight that everyone who saw them felt dread.

Thus, the pedestrians on the street all made way for him.

“That’s the genius student of the O’Brien Academy, Wharton. Look. He’s riding a magical beast of the eighth rank.”

“Saber-Toothed Tiger. How fierce! If I had a magical beast of my own, how great that would be.”

Many people on the streets chatted about Wharton as he passed by. In the past, when Linley had seen that Velocidragon for the first time, he too had dreamed of having a powerful magical beast like a Velocidragon for his companion. In the eyes of many youths, Wharton was their role model.

Saber-Toothed Tigers were extremely fast. Even when travelling on the streets, it moved forward very rapidly and very nimbly.

“Here we are.” Wharton saw that magnificent hotel from far away. This was the appointed meeting spot for him and the Seventh Princess. The receptionist for the hotel recognized Wharton as well, and immediately opened the door for Wharton to enter.

Leading the Saber-Toothed Tiger behind him, Wharton entered the hotel.

Wharton looked around the hotel, his gaze finally settling on the person he cared about the most. He immediately called out happily, “Nina.” But just at this moment, Wharton suddenly frowned... because he also once again saw the person who irritated him.

“Wharton.”

Nina had a full head of lustrous blonde hair, and her pale face was as charming as ever. Her brilliant, shining eyes didn’t have a single hint of impurity in them.

Nina ran over happily towards Wharton, who immediately stepped forward, taking Nina by the hand.

“That guy is bothering me again,” Nina whispered to Wharton.

Wharton glanced at the distant man, saying in a low voice, “Nina, don’t pay any attention to that guy.” But just at that moment, the handsome young man walked over. With a calm laugh, he said, “Wharton, I really didn’t expect to see you here. Why is it that you always appear wherever Nina is?”

“Shut your mouth, Lamonte.” Wharton frowned. “Remember. Nina’s name isn’t for the likes of you to call out. And also. The question you asked me, I should be asking you. Why is it that wherever Nina is, you always appear?”

Lamonte glanced at Wharton, a smile that was not a smile on his face.

Although on the surface, he didn't seem to care much, in his heart, Lamonte really disliked this Wharton. After all, it was Wharton who had taken Nina away from him.

"Oh, a Saber-Toothed Tiger." Lamonte looked at Wharton's Saber-Toothed Tiger. Laughing, he said, "Wharton, any interest in letting my Blue-eyed Tiger Mastiff have a fight with your Saber-Toothed Tiger? I'll wager that my Blue-eyed Tiger Mastiff would definitely win."

Blue-eyed Tiger Mastiffs and Saber-Toothed Tigers were both magical beasts of the eighth rank.

However, there were differences in power amongst magical beasts of the eighth rank as well. For example, Goldmane Mastiffs and Blue-eyed Tiger Mastiffs were considered one of the top kinds of magical beasts of the eighth rank. Blue-eyed Tiger Mastiffs were particularly effective against tiger-type magical beasts.

"Not interested." Wharton paid his suggestion no heed at all. Looking coldly at Lamonte, Wharton said, "Lamonte, if you really want to have a competition, I wouldn't object to having a sparring match against you. As for having magical beasts, compete? Hrmph."

"A competition between men?"

Lamonte chuckled, then no longer said anything.

He, Lamonte, was an honorary disciple of the War God's College, and he was a warrior of the ninth rank. He was indeed qualified to be arrogant. But right now, virtually all of the ancient clans of the imperial city knew that Wharton was of the Baruch clan, which in turn was the clan of the Dragonblood Warriors. And Wharton was clearly able to use battle-qi.

A scion of the Dragonblood Warrior clan who could use battle-qi was definitely capable of Dragonforming as well.

Lamonte knew very well that although Wharton appeared to be only a warrior of the eighth rank, when using that unique, special warblade of his to attack, he could fight on par with ordinary warriors of the ninth rank. But once Wharton transformed, he, Lamonte, wouldn't be a match at all.

“Let’s leave.” Gently stroking the head of his Blue-eyed Tiger Mastiff, Lamonte chuckled lightly.

And then, Lamonte left along with his magical beast, just like that.

Nina and Wharton headed directly to a private deluxe room on the second floor of the hotel. As for Nina’s female attendant, she stayed outside the room.

“You big lunk, tell me, what should we do about that Lamonte? He is so annoying,” Nina nestled in Wharton’s arms, asking in a soft voice.

‘Big lunk’. This was how Nina had addressed Wharton the first time they had met. Whenever they met in private, this was how Nina would address him.

“It is your own fault for being so charming, Nina.” Wharton grinned as he tweaked Nina’s nose. “Actually, I don’t care too much about that Lamonte fellow. The one I’m worried about is Caylan.”

“Big brother Caylan?” Nina said with resignation, “I only think of him as a big brother, but he... sigh.”

Caylan was twenty-three years old, but was already a magus of the seventh rank.

There were quite a few twenty-three-year-old warriors of the seventh rank, but very few twenty-three-year-old magi of the seventh rank. Moreover, Caylan had reached the seventh rank as a magus when he was twenty-one years old.

If Linley hadn’t sculpted ‘Awakening From the Dream’, most likely it would’ve taken him until the age of twenty to reach the seventh rank.

In the imperial capital, Caylan was considered a genius magus. He had been childhood friends with Nina. And more importantly, Caylan’s father was the Left Premier of the Empire, an extremely powerful man. Caylan himself was, simply put, a very good person as well. It could be said that he was a nearly perfect individual.

## The Beirut Clan

“In terms of lineage as well as personality, Caylan is a fine man.” Wharton held Nina in his arms, speaking softly. “I’m afraid that your Imperial father will give your hand in marriage to Caylan.”

Nina nodded. “It is true that Imperial father values Caylan due to his high talent for magic. In the future, he has a high chance of becoming an Arch Magus of the ninth rank, and even has a chance to become a Saint-level Grand Magus. The Empire has many Saint-level experts, but most of them are Saint-level warriors. There are extremely few Saint-level Grand Magi.”

Wharton sensed that Caylan was a threat.

Although Lamonte belonged to the War God’s College, he was just an honorary disciple. In addition, his clan wasn’t particularly powerful either. He, Wharton, was a Dragonblood Warrior after all. As long as the Emperor wasn’t a fool, he would definitely select Wharton.

But if Caylan were to compete against Wharton, things would be different. His father was, after all, the powerful and influential Left Premier of the Empire.

“Nina.” Wharton became very solemn.

“Hrm?” Nestled in Wharton’s arms, Nina looked up at him.

“I am preparing to request an audience with His Imperial Majesty, and to personally ask for him to give me your hand in marriage,” Wharton said with a very solemn expression on his face.

Nina started, and then a look of wild joy appeared on her face.

“Truly?” Nina was very excited.

“Yes.” Wharton nodded. “Nina, before I do so, you can chat with your Imperial father and get a sense of which way the wind is blowing.”

Nina shook her head helplessly. “I thought I told you already. My Imperial father himself has yet to make up his mind. The only thing he says is, ‘no rush’, ‘no rush’... but my Imperial father does have a very favorable impression of you, and he values you as well. If you really were to ask for my hand, I think your chances would be very high.” Nina was very hopeful.

Only one of her older sisters had married someone whom she loved. For the rest of Nina’s sisters, their marriages were marriages of political convenience, and not very happy ones.

Wharton nodded slightly.

“Don’t worry, Nina. I won’t let anyone take you from me.” Wharton tightly embraced Nina, who placed her head against Wharton’s massive, sturdy chest.

The Northwest Administrative Province. Cloudpeaks Village, outside the provincial capital. On the west side of Cloudpeaks Village, there was a forest. The already Dragonformed Linley was currently sparring with Bebe.

“Bebe, don’t force me,” Linley said helplessly as he wielded the adamantine heavy sword. “If you keep doing this to me, then I’ll be forced to use the Profound Truths of the Earth.”

“Heh heh, Boss, I know you care about me too much to do that to me.” Bebe was hovering in midair, speaking in the human tongue.

Upon reaching the Saint level, magical beasts could freely alter their size, and also speak in human tongues. But only a Deity-level magical beast could transform into a human shape.

In the entire Yulan continent, only the King of the Forest of Darkness and the King of the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, these two powerful Deity-level experts, could transform into a human form.

As for Bebe, who knew how long it would be before he could reach such a level?

“You rascal.” Linley sighed. “I reached the Saint level and finally caught up to you in terms of speed and defense. But you, you immediately entered the Saint level as well. Your speed became even more ridiculous.”

But movement speed and attack speed remained two different concepts.

The speed of swinging a sword was far faster than movement speed. Although in terms of dodging and agility, Linley was no match for Bebe, his adamantine heavy sword was still able to block Bebe's attacks. Thus, facing Bebe, Linley usually just stood there, using his sword to defend himself.

"Heh heh," Bebe laughed proudly.

Actually, Linley's Profound Truths of the Earth still posed a real threat to Bebe. After all, the Profound Truths of the Earth all but ignored external defenses, rendering Bebe's powerful defense useless.

But how could Linley bear to use such a vicious attack against Bebe?

Thus, Bebe continuously teased and taunted Linley in their spars.

"Enough. My body has two claw marks on it now. Are you happy?" Linley laughed as he rubbed Bebe's little head. "Let's go back. It's time to eat."

As he spoke, Linley reverted to his human form, then put on a new set of clothes.

"The Boss is always the best." Bebe flew to Linley's shoulders and giggled.

In Linley's current squad, if Linley were to avoid using the Profound Truths of the Earth, there was no one here who was a match for Bebe. Bebe was a truly powerful Saint-level magical beast, through and through.

"Bebe, what sort of magical beast are you, exactly?" Linley walked while chatting with Bebe.

"I really don't know either." Bebe rapidly shook his little head.

Linley suddenly remembered something, then looked towards Bebe in astonishment. "Bebe, do you remember back when we initiated our 'bond of equals', I asked you what your name was? At that time you said, 'Bei', 'Bei'. You didn't say whatever it was you wanted to say very clearly."

Linley remembered that scene very clearly.

"Little Shadowmouse, what is your name?" Linley had mentally asked him.

The little Shadowmouse had said, somewhat excitedly, "Bei... bei..."

Linley had stared at the little Shadowmouse.

“What’s the little Shadowmouse saying?” Linley didn’t really understand.

His white beard flowing, Doebling Cowart had floated next to him and mentally said, “Linley, this little Shadowmouse is still an infant. He can’t form precise sounds yet. Even when engaging in mental communication with you, for now, he can only communicate simple intentions.”

Due to their spiritual link, Linley had been able to feel the little Shadowmouse’s excitement, but the little Shadowmouse simply couldn’t speak at all.

“Okay. You were saying ‘Bei’... ‘Bei’... then I’m going to call you ‘Bebe’. How’s that?” Linley had grinned as he watched the little Shadowmouse.

The little Shadowmouse had seemed to ponder for a while, and then had happily nodded.

And just like that, Linley had named him ‘Bebe’.

“Did I say that?”

Bebe was startled.

“Oh, right,” Bebe remembered. “I remember now. When I was very, very young, so young that I couldn’t even open my eyes, I heard a very close, very warm voice speak to me.”

Linley immediately looked at Bebe. He had never heard Bebe speak of this before.

It was normal for magical beasts to be unable to open their eyes soon after they were born. At that time, Bebe most likely had just been born not long ago. That was a very distant memory. If Linley hadn’t brought it up, Bebe wouldn’t have recalled it either.

“That voice told me that I belonged to some clan. It instructed me to hide in the back courtyard of your clan’s manor and to not run around. And then, the voice disappeared.” Bebe was very puzzled.

“The Bei-something clan?” Linley said questioningly.



“I don’t recall very well. It seems to have been Bei... Bei... oh!” Bebe’s little eyes lit up. “‘Beirut’. Right. It seems to have been ‘Beirut’. That voice told me that I was a member of the mighty Beirut clan. It told me not to run around, because it was dangerous outside. That’s why I stayed in your manor’s back courtyard the entire time, Boss, as I slowly grew up there.”

Linley now understood.

“The Beirut clan?” Linley was puzzled. “Magical beasts have clans?”

Bebe shook his head in confusion as well. “I don’t know either. I never met my parents after I was born. I just stayed at the back courtyard of your clan’s manor, and all I had to eat were those pieces of rubble.”

Linley firmly imprinted this name into his memory – the Beirut clan!

Linley was absolutely certain that he had never heard of any powerful clan in the Yulan continent named ‘Beirut’. But this clan was most likely a magical beast clan.

A magical beast clan?

Linley didn’t know about it because he was not a magical beast.

But Bebe didn’t know either, because he had no parents.

Ten more days passed for Linley within Cloudpeaks Village. Per Linley’s agreement with McKenzie, all he had to do was make a single trip to visit the Jacques clan within thirty days.

“Big brother Linley, you have a letter.” Jenne ran in excitedly from outside.

“Oh, it should be from the Dawson Conglomerate.”

The Dawson Conglomerate sent a letter every month. Linley immediately walked out. There was a young man leading a horse outside. Upon seeing Linley, the young man immediately bowed and said courteously, “Lord Ley, here is your letter.”

Linley accepted the letter and laughed. “Next month, there will be no need for you to come here.”

The young man looked at Linley questioningly.

“By this time next month, I will no longer be here.” Linley had made the decision long ago that in the next few days, he would head to the Jacques clan.

His wounds had healed long ago, and after Dragonforming, he was a Saint-level combatant. It was time to go visit his little brother.

It had been a long, long time since he had met with Wharton. In his heart, Linley had always missed this one and only sibling of his.

“Yes, Lord Ley,” the young man said respectfully, and then he mounted his horse and left.

As for Linley, he opened the letter and read it. The letter had quite a good amount of general information regarding the current state of affairs for the Radiant Church and the Yulan continent as a whole. It also had some information about Reynolds, George, and Yale. At the bottom was information regarding Wharton.

“George is really formidable.” Linley mentally sighed in praise.

With the support of the Walsh family, George had continued on his upward trajectory within the Yulan Empire. He himself was very talented as well, but more importantly...

The Third Prince of the Yulan Empire had successfully inherited the imperial throne, becoming the Emperor of the Yulan Empire.

Prior to the Third Prince assuming the position of Emperor, George had been on very close terms with him. The two of them were politically of one mind. Now that the Third Prince had succeeded his father as Emperor, George had become the youngest Grand Secretary in the Yulan Empire.

The entire Yulan Empire only had twelve Grand Secretaries. Each of them possessed extraordinary power and authority. What’s more, George was also the Deputy for the Right Premier of the Yulan Empire.

“By comparison, Reynolds hasn’t done as well as George.” Linley chuckled, then he closely read the information regarding Wharton. Linley had a general idea of what Wharton was up to.

But upon reading the letter...

“What?!” Linley was shocked. “Wharton has asked the Emperor for the Seventh Princess’s hand in marriage?”

The Dawson Conglomerate had just transmitted this news to the provincial capital of Basil not long ago. After all, this event only happened a few days ago.

“The Emperor didn’t agree?”

Frowning, Linley continued to read. “Fortunately, although he didn’t agree, he didn’t refuse too harshly either.”

According to the letter, the Emperor was continuing to delay.

That Lamonte had gone long ago to ask the same question, and the Emperor hadn’t agreed then either. Now that Wharton had gone, the Emperor still declined to agree. What he said was, “Nina is still young. There is no rush.”

Nina was already twenty-one years old. She wasn’t that young.

But Nina was both a magus and a warrior, and her affinity as a magus was to water magic, which was of exceeding benefit to one’s body. Nina’s lifespan would definitely be very long. It would be easy for her to live for three or four hundred years. Given this, it was true that she did not need to be in a rush to marry.

“One is the son of the Left Premier of the Empire, while the other is an honorary disciple of the War God’s College.” Linley could immediately tell who his younger brother’s greatest adversary was. It was the Left Premier’s son, that magus named Caylan.

“It seems as though the situation isn’t looking good.” Linley’s forehead was furrowed. A cold light flashed in his eyes. “No matter what, I can’t let Wharton walk the same road that I did. Tomorrow. Tomorrow, I’ll go pay a visit to the Jacques clan. After satisfying the agreement, we’ll head directly to the imperial capital.”

Linley had made his decision.

But right at that moment...

“Lord, Lord!” the familiar voice of Gates rang out. Gates was probably the most lively of the five brothers.

“Lord!” It wasn’t just Gates; the others were shouting as well.

Puzzled, Linley returned to the courtyard. As he did, Gates and the others immediately rushed to him, their faces filled with wild joy.

“All of you are so happy. What’s the good news?” Linley laughed.

“Second brother, second brother has already reached the ninth rank!” Gates was the first to speak.

“Ankh, our second brother, is at the Saint level as well after transforming.” The third brother, Hazer, said with joy.

Linley was startled.

Of the five brothers, Barker was the first to reach the ninth rank. After he possessed the power of a Saint-level, the other four brothers, all at the peak of the eighth rank, continued to work hard. Unexpectedly, another one had reached the ninth rank so soon.

“Myself. Bebe. Barker. Ankh. All of a sudden, four of us have reached the Saint level.” Linley had never heard of a clan possessing four Saint-level combatants. The scariest part of it was... the other three brothers could break through at any moment as well.

Linley had not noticed, but he was grinning so widely that his lips threatened to split apart.

Perhaps the very next day, someone would come running over to tell him that another one of the five brothers had broken through. They would then have yet another Saint-level in their ranks.

Linley now felt all the more convinced that his decision to go rescue Barker and his brothers was an absolutely genius decision. By now, aside from Barker and Ankh, the other three brothers could be considered Saint-levels in the making.

## Guest

Living in the Northwest Administrative Province, it could be said that Linley had gotten everything he had desired. In the blink of an eye, he, Bebe, the first brother, Barker, and the second brother, Ankh, had all reached the Saint level of power. Their group now had four Saint-level experts. Even the three major trading unions or the four major assassin's guilds couldn't boast such a number!

This was an extremely powerful, hidden force.

Unfortunately, in the imperial capital, the opposite was true for Wharton.

In the spacious training area in the back part of the manor, Wharton was wildly training with his ancestral heirloom, the warblade 'Slaughterer'. Sweat was pouring down from every part of his body, but it seemed as though Wharton didn't feel tired at all, as he continued to train.

Watching quietly, Housekeeper Hiri shook his head to himself.

"Wharton is just like his father. He cares too much about love." Hiri had watched Hogg grow up, and knew how deep a love Hogg had felt for Linley's mother, Lina. When Lina had been abducted, Hogg had been in misery for over ten years. The only reason he had endured was because he had to raise Linley and Wharton.

As soon as Hogg felt that Linley and Wharton could grow up on their own, he threw away everything to investigate his wife's whereabouts. In the end, he paid for it with his life.

"Wharton is the same. His Imperial Majesty didn't totally cut off all his hopes. He only asked Wharton not to be in such a rush, and that there was no need for the Seventh Princess to marry so soon. But Wharton has become like this..." Hiri kept on sighing.

Housekeeper Hiri didn't know that it wasn't just Hogg and Wharton who were

like this. Linley was the same as well.

“Groooooowl.”

After this bestial growl, Wharton slowly stopped brandishing the warblade in his hands. After having painstakingly trained for so many years, Wharton had already reached a very high level of proficiency with the warblade. The bestial roar that came out just now was one of the hallmarks of the warblade style he had developed.

“Grandpa Hiri.” Wharton looked at Housekeeper Hiri, squeezing a smile onto his face.

After having unleashed all of his frustrations just now, Wharton felt a bit better inside.

“Wharton, don’t be too sad. You and the Seventh Princess still have a chance.” Hiri laughed. “I think the reason His Imperial Majesty has been delaying is because it is very hard for him to choose between you and Caylan.”

Wharton nodded.

Wharton actually understood a great deal about the current Emperor.

He was an Emperor that highly valued human talent, and he was a fairly decisive man as well. But he had one flaw. That flaw was — bias! Extreme bias!

Everyone in the imperial capital knew this.

For example, twenty years ago, the Southeast Administrative Province’s managing clan had made some mistakes. Since they didn’t have the backing of a Saint-level expert, in the end, their clan was ransacked by the Emperor. At the time, many clans had desired to take over the Southeast Administrative Province. But in the end, the Emperor had actually given his one and only younger brother, Duke Julin, authority over the Southeast Administrative Province.

Anyone the Emperor was close to, he tended to be biased towards.

Caylan’s father, the Imperial Left Premier, Judd Darryl, had grown up alongside the Emperor. They were on very good terms with each other. After the Emperor took the throne, he naturally appointed Judd Darryl to a high rank,

eventually appointing him the Imperial Left Premier. He possessed enormous power, and could be described to be second to only the Emperor himself.

The Emperor, being on such close terms with the Imperial Left Premier, naturally was very partial and protective towards Caylan as well.

In addition, Caylan was a very talented, worthy person. It would have been very natural for the Emperor to agree to Caylan's attempt to woo Nina. However, Wharton was also wooing Nina, and Nina herself liked Wharton. This made the Emperor hesitate.

Caylan and Wharton were both very talented.

He doted on Caylan, but he also doted on Nina.

Caylan's father was his dear friend and was one of the pillars of the Empire. But Wharton was a Dragonblood Warrior.

This was a very hard choice to make!

"I understand what His Imperial Majesty is thinking. For him to refuse my direct request to be allowed to wed Nina means that it will not be so easy for the two of us to be together." Wharton sighed.

"Wharton, you need to have some self-confidence," Housekeeper Hiri encouraged.

Wharton forced out a smile. "Grandpa Hiri, I know what the situation is. In the Empire, His Imperial Majesty's decree is absolute law. The only person he is afraid of is the War God himself. That's why I originally took part in the competition to become an honorary disciple. I wanted to build a relationship with the War God. So long as the War God was willing to assist me, everything would have been set."

The War God. The true foundation and pillar of the O'Brien Empire.

A single word from the War God could make the Emperor abdicate without daring to say a word of complaint. After all the War God was the founding Emperor of the O'Brien Empire, and he was also a Deity-level expert who stood at the top of the entire Yulan continent.

"Slowly, slowly. Don't be in a rush," Housekeeper Hiri consoled.

“Lord Count, the Seventh Princess has arrived,” an attendant walked into the training grounds and said respectfully.

“Nina came?” Wharton was very surprised.

Although the two were on very close terms, Nina rarely came to visit him at his manor. Wharton immediately took a quick rinse, changed into a fresh set of clothes, then went to the main hall to see Nina.

Within the main hall.

A look of happiness was on Nina’s face. The female attendant behind her laughed quietly. “Princess, what sort of expression do you think the Lord Count will have on his face when he hears this news?”

“What sort of expression the big lunk will have?” Nina pondered the question, her laughter becoming all the merrier.

As she thought and chatted, Nina suddenly heard footsteps. Turning, she saw a large, powerful figure walk in, as tall and strong as a wargod. Staring at this familiar figure, Nina felt a sweet feeling in her heart. In her heart, Wharton had already become her mental pillar of support.

“Nina, why have you come to my place? Aren’t you afraid your Imperial father will scold you?” Wharton laughed as he walked in.

Nina pouted. “He can scold me if he wants. I wanted to come.”

Seeing the adorable look on Nina’s face, Wharton felt a gentle, warm feeling in his heart. He sat next to Nina and held her hands. “Nina, judging from the look on your face, I think you are hiding something from me.”

Nina wrinkled her nose, saying delightedly, “I can’t hide anything from you. I want to tell you some good news.”

“Good news? What good news? Has your Imperial father changed his mind and decided to allow me to marry you?” Wharton said casually.

The Emperor’s words were as good as gold. How could he so casually take back what he had said?

“Of course not.” Nina’s smile was very bright.



“Then what is it?”

Nina’s expression grew solemn. “Two days ago, you spoke with my Imperial father, but he didn’t agree. I felt very unhappy, so I thought of something. I went directly to big brother Caylan.”

“You went to find Caylan?” Wharton’s eyebrows shot up. Caylan was his enemy in love. “What did you go find him for?”

Nina giggled. “Okay, stop guessing. I just went to have a good chat with big brother Caylan. I told him that the only thing I felt for him was the affection due an older brother. We grew up together, and he really was like an older brother to me. I asked big brother Caylan to help the two of us. I told big brother Caylan that if I were to leave you, Wharton, I wouldn’t be able to live.”

Wharton suddenly felt deeply moved.

“Big brother Caylan was quiet for a long time, but in the end, he agreed that he would speak to His Imperial Majesty, and that he would abandon his pursuit of me and allow us to be together.” Nina’s smile was incandescent.

“Caylan is giving up?” Wharton was shocked.

Wharton had been in the imperial capital for a long time now, and had interacted with Caylan several times. Wharton could clearly sense the love that Caylan felt towards Nina. He was truly, completely in love with her. And yet, Caylan had decided to give up. Wharton felt very moved, while at the same time, he began to somewhat admire Caylan.

“Big brother Caylan has given up, while the others aren’t much of a threat. As for that Lamonte, in my Imperial father’s heart, he can’t compare to you.” A very happy look was on Nina’s face. “Big lunk, there’s no one who can stop us from being together now.”

Excitement!

There was no way he could stop this sense of excitement and joy from swelling in his heart. The most troublesome, headache-inducing competitor facing him had voluntarily given up. This sort of sudden, unexpected joy made Wharton feel a little giddy and dizzy.

Staring at Nina's incandescent smile, Wharton felt more moved than he ever had been.

"Right. No one will prevent us from being together." Wharton held Nina tightly in his arms.



\*

Linley, Bebe, Haeru, Rebecca, Leena, Jenne, Zassler, and Barker and his brothers left Cloudpeaks Village, making their way towards the provincial capital of Basil.

The provincial capital of Basil. The Jacques clan's castle.

Linley's group had arrived at the gates.

"Who comes before us?" the castle guards barked at them from far away. The Jacques clan was the local hegemon of the Northwest Administrative Province. Their headquarters wasn't a place where just anyone could enter.

The fifth of the brothers, Gates, immediately shouted loudly, "Go inform McKenzie that our Lord Linley has arrived."

"Who is making so much noise outside?!"

A familiar voice shouted. Linley carefully stared in the direction of that voice. Indeed, that gaudily dressed young man, Albert, came rushing out amidst a number of servants.

Seeing Linley's group, the look on Albert's face changed.

"You are called Ley, right? How dare you come to my house?" A vicious, sinister look was on Albert's face. "I didn't expect that those six people belonging to the Radiant Church wouldn't be able to kill you. But my Jacques clan isn't so easily bullied by the likes of you."

At the same time, Albert also noticed that behind Linley, there was Jenne, as well as Rebecca and her sister.

Jenne's complexion was as beautiful as a flower petal in a pool of water, while Rebecca and Leena possessed a certain mysterious grace that was extremely

mesmerizing.

“How the hell did this guy get so many beautiful women to follow him?” Albert felt extremely aggrieved.

“How dare you come to cause trouble at the gates of the Jacques clan? Men! Seize them!” Albert immediately ordered loudly.

The surrounding guards all charged forward, but before Linley made a single move, Barker and his brothers charged forward.

“Spare their lives,” Linley said calmly.

“Got it,” Gates said excitedly.

“As long as they don’t die, right?” Barker’s eyes held a hint of glee as well. These five brothers had been famous in the Eighteen Northern Duchies as bloodthirsty warlords. When leading their armies, they had killed countless people.

These five enormous siblings were like war machines. They seized one guard after another, as easily as snatching up a chicken, and then casually tossed them like sandbags towards the castle gates. The force of these tosses by the Barker brothers was quite high. These warriors of the fifth and sixth ranks had their bones snapped as soon as they hit the ground.

“You...” Albert was so angry that his entire body was quivering. “You are too arrogant and wild. You dare act like this in front of the Jacques clan?”

“What is going on out here?”

An angry roar could be heard, as another group of people appeared from within the castle. The leader was a middle-aged man with a square face. Albert immediately bowed. “Father, these people are causing trouble at our gates, and they even injured our guards.”

“Oh?” This middle-aged man was the leader of the Jacques clan, Odin Jacques.

Odin Jacques stared coldly at Linley’s group.

“Haha, brother Linley, you’ve arrived!” A loud laugh could be heard as a blur suddenly descended from the heavens, appearing in front of the castle gates.

That stiff, ramrod straight back. That white-flecked hair.

Odin and Albert, upon seeing this man, immediately dropped all pretenses of arrogance and immediately bowed respectfully.

“Odin, what are you doing here?” McKenzie looked coldly at Odin.

Odin trembled, not daring to speak. He had heard how McKenzie had just said the words, ‘brother Linley’. He didn’t dare say a word.

“This has nothing to do with this Odin fellow. Only, there’s a small grudge between his son Albert and myself. Thus, he wanted to use the clan’s forces to resolve our private issues,” Linley said with a calm laugh.

“Grudge?” McKenzie nodded.

Casting a single cold glance at Albert, McKenzie turned to look at Odin. “Odin, have Albert go to the prefectural city of Deco to assist his uncle. The provincial capital of Basil is no longer an appropriate place for him to stay.”

Albert’s face instantly turned white.

The provincial capital of Basil was no longer a suitable place for him to stay? This was as good as saying that his position as heir to the clan leadership had just been stripped from him. Moreover, he was being exiled to a prefectural city, and he wasn’t even going to be the city governor; he was just going to assist his uncle. In the future, he wouldn’t even be on Keane’s level.

“Yes, grandfather.” Odin didn’t dare to hesitate in the slightest.

In the Northwest Administrative Province, McKenzie’s stature was the same as the War God O’Brien’s stature in the O’Brien Empire. Even if he wanted Odin to give up his position as clan leader, Odin wouldn’t dare to voice a single word of complaint.

“Brother Linley, I am so very sorry. I was out for a stroll just now, and so I arrived here a bit late.” McKenzie warmly welcomed Linley into his castle.

Smiling, Linley entered the castle alongside McKenzie, with Odin courteously following them from behind. As for the pale-faced Albert, no one paid him any more attention.

## Personal Disciple

The Jacques clan's castle was extremely large, but virtually everyone in the castle knew that the 'quiet park' that took up nearly a third of the castle was a restricted area.

Because that was where McKenzie lived. Aside from McKenzie and his wife, only three attendants as well as McKenzie's disciples were permitted to enter. Normally, even the clan leader or his sons had to be granted entry before entering.

The quiet park was extremely large, and more than half of it was taken up by trees and flowers. The buildings inside the park were both simple and unadorned. But despite that, it would be easy for over a hundred people to live within this place.

Linley's group had been invited to enter the quiet park.

A jade-haired, beautiful, virtuous looking woman who seemed to be in her thirties guided Linley's group through the park, helping arrange places for them to live.

"Bliss, prepare a banquet, just like last time when Haydson came to visit," McKenzie said to the beautiful attendant.

"Yes, milord."

The jade-haired woman was very shocked. McKenzie, when receiving guests, was very particular about how he treated them. Generally speaking, this high-class banquet that McKenzie was now instructing to hold was generally only for Saint-level combatants.

"Can this youngster be a Saint-level expert?" Bliss glanced at Linley, guessing silently.

McKenzie laughed towards Linley. "Linley, although you've been in my

Northwest Administrative Province for quite some time, I'll wager you have yet to try some of the true delicacies of the Northwest Administrative Province."

"True delicacies?" Linley raised an eyebrow.

When he was staying in the hotels, the dishes Linley had ordered were all very famous. After all, for someone at Linley's level, money was of no concern.

"Of course, the provincial capital has many restaurants with fine dishes. But there are some special dishes that even those finest of restaurants only prepare a single portion of each week. Those special delicacies are something that you can't simply buy with money," McKenzie said proudly.

Throughout his life, McKenzie had only two hobbies; the first was training, and the second was sampling the various delicacies of the world.

McKenzie had even once said that if one didn't have the chance to eat rare foods, then one's life would have no flavor.

"Then today, I must have a good sampling of what you have to offer." Linley chuckled.

Right now, only Linley and McKenzie were in the main hall, as well as Bebe, who was standing on Linley's shoulders. As for Barker and his brothers, all of them had retired to their rooms.

"Hrm?" Seeing the Shadowmouse on Linley's shoulders, McKenzie seemed to be slightly surprised. "Linley, I have the feeling that this magical beast of yours seems to be quite extraordinary. But he looks like a black Shadowmouse. This..." Black Shadowmice were the weakest type of Shadowmice. But McKenzie was certain that given Linley's status, there was no way he would have such a weak magical beast companion.

Bebe had reached the Saint level already.

Currently, however, Bebe was totally suppressing his aura. If a Saint-level combatant were to suppress their aura, unless the opponents were far stronger, they wouldn't be able to sense the exact power.

"Bebe is a peak-stage magical beast of the ninth rank." Linley laughed.

On Linley's shoulders, Bebe flashed his fangs disdainfully towards McKenzie.

As Linley planned it, Bebe having reached the Saint-rank was one of his most valuable hidden trump cards.

Bebe was already extremely terrifying before reaching the Saint-rank. Now that he had reached the Saint-rank, if Linley didn't use the Profound Truths of the Earth, he would be absolutely ravaged by Bebe in their sparring matches.

But amongst Saint-level experts, how many possessed such a strange attack as Linley's Profound Truths of the Earth? Generally, Saint-level experts weren't a match for Bebe at all.

"A black Shadowmouse that is a peak-stage magical beast of the ninth rank?" McKenzie was still very surprised.

"Enough about that. McKenzie, in a few days, I plan to head off to the imperial capital. What do you think would be a good time for us to hold our sparring match?" Linley asked.

"Leaving so soon?" McKenzie was a bit disappointed. "I was hoping to celebrate with you for quite a while, brother Linley. That way, when we sparred together, we would learn more as well. But since you have business to attend to in the imperial capital, then... how about this? In three days, let's have our sparring match in that small desolate mountain outside the city."

"Works for me." Linley nodded in agreement.

"Come, come take a look at my training yard." McKenzie said warmly, and Linley followed McKenzie over to take a look.

While Linley was enjoying the warm hospitality of McKenzie, Wharton and Nina had left the imperial capital and were headed for the War God's College.

The War God's College was built on top of a tall mountain. The mountain was thus named, War God Mountain.

"It has already been over two hundred years since the last time the War God accepted a personal disciple. A few years ago, the Prodigy Sword Saint, Olivier, refused the War God's invitation. I didn't expect that he would suddenly declare that he would accept another personal disciple."

"If one day, I could become his personal disciple, even if it were just for a day,

I would die a happy man.”

The road outside the imperial capital was filled with people, all chatting and calling out to each other. The War God’s College accepting new honorary disciples was no longer an issue of major interest; accepting a new personal disciple, however, was an earth-shaking event. The importance of such an event was not one whit less than a new Emperor assuming the throne.

After all, in the past five thousand years, the War God O’Brien had only accepted a total of twenty or so personal disciples. Many of them were already deceased.

As for Emperors?

In the past five thousand years, there had been over a hundred of them.

Although in the hearts of the commoners, this was a huge affair, the War God’s Colleges’ method of carrying the recruiting of a personal disciple was very simple: when the time came, they would simply send out a public announcement of who the next personal disciple would be.

The designated time was today at noon.

And thus, early this morning, a large number of people had come to congregate outside War God Mountain. Wharton and Nina naturally went to watch this momentous event as well.

Within their carriage.

“Big lunk, who do you think will become the next personal disciple of the War God?” Nina asked. Even in the eyes of an imperial princess, the War God was high and far above them, someone who they could never approach. Since she was born, Nina had never seen the War God once.

In fact, not even the current reigning Emperor, Johann, had ever met the War God.

But the personally taught disciples of the War God were qualified to meet him. From this, one could see the extremely elite status the War God’s personally taught disciples held. In the past, when that Prodigy Sword Saint, Olivier, had refused the enticing offer to become a personally taught disciple of



the War God, everyone was shocked and filled with admiration.

“The personally taught disciple of the War God would definitely be a person of enormous talent. At the very least, he would be a warrior of the ninth rank, and one with the possibility of reaching the Saint level.” Wharton’s words were based on historical precedent.

“However, there are too many experts of the ninth rank in the Empire, and talent level is difficult to determine as well. It is very hard to say who the War God will accept as his personal disciple.”

Suddenly, the carriage came to a halt.

“Princess, we’ve already reached War God Mountain. There are too many people up ahead. The carriage can’t pass through,” the driver called out.

Wharton immediately helped Nina off the carriage.

“There are so many people here.” Seeing the sea of people in front of them, Nina couldn’t help but be afraid.

At the base of the cloud-topped War God Mountain, people were densely clustered everywhere. Earlier, carriages might have been able to advance, but now, none would be able to. The mountain roads were filled with people.

“Nina.” Wharton smiled towards Nina.

“Groooowl.” The Saber-Toothed Tiger, who had been following the carriage the entire time, leapt over. Wharton put Nina on top of it. “Have a good seat and take a firm grip. We’ll take a shortcut.”

Nina was both a warrior and a magus. Although she wasn’t very powerful, she was able to clutch quite tightly to the Saber-Toothed Tiger’s neck.

“Let’s go.” Nina was very excited.

The Saber-Toothed Tiger immediately soared into the air, with Wharton travelling at high speed by its side. Wharton and Nina didn’t take the main road; rather, they took some hard-to-traverse side roads from the back of the mountain.

Even the toughest, steepest of mountain paths were as easy for the Saber-Toothed Tiger to traverse as flat land. Wharton was extremely agile as well.

The two of them clambered up at high speed. On the way, they encountered quite a few powerful experts who were using the same method as they were. After all, if they had to squeeze in through the main road, who knew how long it would take?

“Here we are.” With a final leap, Wharton and the Saber-Toothed Tiger arrived at the main plaza.

“Wow. I’m so scared that my entire body is covered with sweat now.” Nina’s little face was very red. She hopped off the Saber-Toothed Tiger’s back.

The neat, flat stone plaza in front of them was extremely large. There were already over ten thousand people present, and yet it didn’t seem crowded at all. In fact, to the contrary, it seemed rather empty.

“Big lunk, did you know that this huge training school’s foundation was originally created by the War God himself? That year, he used one stroke of his sword to slice off the main peak of War God Mountain, then had the War God’s College built on the now-flat land.

Wharton was astonished at the War God’s power.

In truth, War God Mountain actually had several mountain peaks, with one being the primary peak. But the War God effortlessly chopped it off with one blow of his sword, creating a flat surface, upon which these various buildings of the War God’s College were erected, becoming the place where the honorary disciples of the War God’s College would stay.

According to legend, the personally taught disciples of the War God lived at another mountain peak.

“It isn’t time yet. Let’s have a rest.” Holding Nina’s hand, Wharton headed to a nearby stone bench and took a seat.

The plaza began to fill up with more and more people. Finally, the appointed time came.

On the tall dais in the front part of the plaza, there were a large number of people, all of whom were the honorary disciples of the War God’s College. Wharton’s ‘competitor’, Lamonte, was there as well.

“Look. A Saint-level expert.”

“Someone is flying over.”

Wharton and Nina all looked upward into the sky. They saw three human forms dressed in blue robes flash through the air, flying shoulder-to-shoulder towards the dais. Finally, they landed.

“Three Saint-level experts!” Everyone present felt their hearts tremble. Normally, even a single Saint-level expert was a rare sight, but now, three had appeared.

After landing, one of the three Saint-level experts, a middle-aged man who appeared to be the leader, said in a loud voice, “Everyone, today, we three fellow apprentices have come at our master’s instruction to announce who the 27th personal disciple will be.”

Everyone grew quiet.

“All three of them are the personal disciples of the War God.” Wharton suddenly felt as though he couldn’t breathe. The War God’s College was simply too powerful. All three of these personal disciples were Saint-level experts. No wonder the O’Brien Empire was named the most militarily mighty Empire in the world.

That middle-aged man continued, “The last time a personal disciple was accepted was in year 9723 of the Yulan calendar. This is now year 10008 of the Yulan calendar. 285 years have passed.”

Everyone below began to murmur. Such a long time had passed between accepting new disciples. 285 years. Many people didn’t even live that long.

“I announce that my master’s 27th personal disciple will be... Blumer Akerlund!”

Hearing this name, everyone in the plaza immediately let out a roar of joyous approval. At the same time, from within the group of honorary disciples who were standing on the dais, Blumer quietly walked out.

Blumer was rather skinny, and his eyes were slightly sunken. He gave the appearance of being a resolute, cold person.

“Respectful greetings to you, senior fellow apprentices.” Blumer bowed as he walked in front of those three men.

Those other three personal disciples of the War God all nodded slightly. Their leader, the middle-aged man, withdrew a scarlet interspatial ring from within his clothes.

Blumer knew that the emblem of one’s status as a personal disciple of the War God was always an interspatial ring, and a scarlet red one at that.

“So it’s him.”

Watching from below, Wharton shook his head slightly. Last time, when he had tried to join the ranks of the honorary disciples, the one who had won in the end was this Blumer.

Unexpectedly, after just a year had passed, Blumer had suddenly become the personal disciple of the War God!

Nina nodded as she said, “The seemingly common and ordinary Akerlund clan actually produced two geniuses in a row. The Prodigy Sword Saint, Olivier, was an absolute genius who even the War God wished to take on as his disciple. And now, Olivier’s younger brother, Blumer, has himself become the personal disciple of the War God.”

However, Wharton’s heart was filled with self-confidence despite seeing Blumer’s success.

So what if Blumer was able to join the War God’s College? Wasn’t the point of it all to reach the Saint level? He, Wharton, upon reaching the Saint level as a Dragonblood Warrior, would definitely be a powerful expert amongst the Saint-levels.

## A Saint-Level Battle

While the citizens of the imperial capital were celebrating the 27th personal disciple the War God had chosen in five thousand years, in the far-off Northwest Administrative Province, Linley and the Saint-level expert, McKenzie, were currently chatting happily over wine. Tonight, they would prepare to do battle.

Tonight, the curved moon hung high in the sky, its faint silver glow covering the world, making it seem as though the entire world had been covered by a layer of gauze.

Atop the small desolate mountain outside the provincial capital of Basil, Linley and McKenzie were walking shoulder to shoulder, with Bebe seated on Linley's shoulder. The others did not come.

The only witness to this battle would be Bebe.

The small mountain was extremely desolate and depopulated. Aside from a few sparse trees, the mountain peak was empty and bare. Linley and McKenzie stood side by side on the top of the mountain. The mountain wind howled drearily, rustling their clothes.

Linley and McKenzie glanced at each other, each understanding the hidden meaning in the other's eyes.

Bebe very obediently hopped off from Linley's shoulders, and Linley removed his upper body clothes, storing them in his interspatial ring. He began to transform, and black scales quickly covered his entire body, while his forehead, back, elbows, and knees began to sprout sharp spikes. That iron-whip-like tail began to swing about behind him, and his eyes suddenly transformed into that merciless dark golden color. That faint layer of blue light appeared on his scales as well. As immense power began to radiate from Linley's body, dust and small rocks began to be caught up in the swirl of energy.

“Supreme Warriors live up to their name.” McKenzie’s eyes lit up.

“Whoosh!”

Simultaneously, Linley and McKenzie transformed into a pair of rainbows as they flew to the air above the small mountain. They stood there in mid-air, roughly a hundred meters from each other.

McKenzie flipped his hand, and an azure spear appeared within it. “In order to forge this spear, I had to spend twenty million gold coins to purchase all sorts of precious ores. After completing it, I named it ‘Azureflame’.”

Linley flipped his own hand, and the Bloodviolet flexible sword appeared within it.

“I acquired this sword from a very dangerous location in the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts. Its name is ‘Bloodviolet.’”

With regards to his abilities in using Bloodviolet, Linley had reached the fourth level, ‘Profound Truths of the Wind’. However, Linley had only reached the first, simplest stage of the ‘Profound Truths of the Wind’, which he had named ‘Rippling Wind’. Despite that, when combined with the unique properties of Bloodviolet, Linley still felt confident in his ability to deal with McKenzie.

“Being at the Saint level makes me feel as though I am filled with boundless power.” Wielding the Bloodviolet Godsword in his hands, Linley felt extremely confident. “In the past, it was impossible for me to use Bloodviolet to harm a Saint-level combatant. It wasn’t that Bloodviolet was insufficiently sharp; it was that my own battle-qi and strength was far from being sufficient.”

How could the weapons used by most experts, in terms of sharpness, compare with this divine artifact, the Bloodviolet Godsword?

Bloodviolet was so sharp that if one didn’t use any battle-qi, just by virtue of its sharpness, it could pierce the defense of most magical beasts of the seventh rank. How many weapons could possibly compete with such terrifying sharpness?

Once it was matched with a Saint-level amount of battle-qi, its sharpness and power would reach an even more astonishing level.

“Then, let us begin!”

McKenzie’s body began to radiate a boundless desire for battle. Standing high up in the air, as the wind blew his long robes about, McKenzie’s body suddenly began to be covered with a layer of crackling flame, and the Azureflame spear in his hands began to emit flame as well.

His entire body seemed to have been covered by fire.

Clad in flame, and holding his spear at the ready, McKenzie looked like a god of battle.

“His battle-qi has actually reached such a level.” Linley’s eyes lit up.

“Boom!” Linley’s own battle-qi exploded as well, as that azure-black battle-qi totally covered Linley’s body, and also activated Bloodviolet. Those azure-black scales were fully covered by that azure-black battle-qi, making Linley look like a demon from the Infernal Realm.

A hint of a smile was on McKenzie’s lips.

Suddenly...

“Swish!”

Linley only saw a blur as McKenzie slashed his way through the air at him. The spear in McKenzie’s hands, burning with flame, seemed to have locked down all the surrounding space as it pierced towards Linley with tremendous, boundless power.

At this moment, it seemed as though the only thing which existed in this world was that spear.

“Clang!”

A strange, devilish purple light gently slashed open the locked space, and the tip of the sword clashed against the tip of the spear. As they did, Linley and McKenzie’s battle-qi exploded through their weapons at each other.

“Boooom!”

A terrifying explosive sound blasted forth from between the two of them as the power released from this clash of two Saint-level experts burst forth in all

directions. Even the boulders dotting the mountain beneath them began to crack apart from the released battle-qi.

The two separated at high speed after the clash.

“Hrm?” Linley glanced at McKenzie once. “His battle-qi is actually slightly more powerful than mine.” Dragonblood Warriors simply possessed too much natural talent. Even an early-stage Saint-level Dragonblood Warrior would only have just slightly less battle-qi than an ordinary mid-stage Saint-level combatant.

Of the Four Supreme Warriors, the Undying Warriors had the best defense, the Tigerstriped Warriors had the highest speed, the Violetflame Warriors had the fastest healing speed, but the Dragonblood Warriors had the best offense.

Dragonblood Warriors were nothing to joke about.

“Haha, wonderful. Take another attack from me!” McKenzie laughed loudly as he charged towards Linley at high speed again, transforming into three separate mirages as he did so.

“You want to compete in speed?”

Linley smirked.

Linley’s body blurred, then transformed into three separate mirages as he charged towards McKenzie as well, leaving a streak behind in the sky as he did so.

“Haaargh!”

The previously refined McKenzie was now extremely wild and unrestrained as his three mirages transformed into nine. But somehow, those nine shadow-McKenzie’s were all wielding the spear in their hands in a different manner.

“Bam!”

The nine mirages spun their spears in different ways, then thrust their spears at Linley.

Originally, Linley had only seen nine spears, but after those spears coiled about mysteriously, suddenly, it seemed as though the entire world was filled with countless spear-shadows.



An infinite number of spear-shadows, giving Linley no place to run.

“Haha...” Linley laughed loudly, while at the same time, he himself transformed into a whirlwind of action. In what seemed like the blink of an eye, Linley’s entire body had turned into a spinning tornado, and surrounding that spinning tornado were countless flashes of that devilish purple light.

Those countless spear-shadows were all blocked by those countless flashes of violet light.

McKenzie was stunned.

“Tornado Technique – Shatter!”

Linley roared loudly, and then he slammed towards McKenzie as though he were a giant warhammer. In the blink of an eye, that Bloodviolet sword in his hand seemed to have transformed into ten thousand different swords.

Those sword strikes all seemed so light and graceful, but when they collided against McKenzie’s spear, McKenzie felt as though they each had the power of a thunderbolt.

Wielding something light as though it were heavy!

“Bam!” “Bam!” “Bam!” “Bam!”

Linley’s entire body had been transformed into a tornado, and McKenzie had a feeling as though the heavens themselves were aiding Linley. The strangest thing was, it seemed as though the sword in Linley’s hand could disappear then reappear at will.

Under these repeated assault, McKenzie was forced down to the ground from the sky.

“Bam!”

McKenzie landed heavily on the ground, and the earth around him cracked as dust swirled up everywhere. The flames atop of McKenzie’s body began to burn even hotter, and the warlike look in his eyes only grew wilder.

Linley landed heavily on the ground as well. Covered in azure-black battle-qi, the aura Linley gave off was totally opposite compared to McKenzie’s.

One was domineering and tyrannical. The other was dark and mysterious.

McKenzie lowered his head to glance at his chest.

Fresh blood oozed out from beneath his clothes, and then evaporated under the intense heat of the flames. But McKenzie's bloodstained clothes indicated that he clearly had been wounded.

"Linley, I could understand your movements, but there was one thing I couldn't understand. How could that Bloodviolet Godsword of yours fuse with the wind so well?" McKenzie was a very experienced Saint-level combatant.

The level of 'impose' was that of using the imposing force of the heavens and the earth.

But the amount of natural force that Linley had used to support his attack was truly frightening.

"Of course there is a limit to the amount of energy which the heavens and earth can loan you. As for the reason why you had such trouble defending..." Smiling, Linley lifted Bloodviolet into the air, and it suddenly, bizarrely, began to curve about every which way.

If you wanted a sword to be sufficiently hard and sharp, one of the prerequisites for that was that the sword would not be able to be very flexible.

"This... this is a flexible sword?" McKenzie was very surprised.

Just then, when Linley exchanged blows with him, he had used Bloodviolet to attack in curving arcs. However, due to Linley's usage of 'impose', the impression that McKenzie had gotten was that the sword would suddenly disappear, then appear from somewhere else.

This was another way one could use 'impose'.

"Right. This is a flexible sword," Linley said.

"But how can a flexible sword fight head-on against my Azureflame spear?" McKenzie was very shocked.

The reason why a flexible sword could straighten and be hard was because of battle-qi. But how could a weapon that relied on battle-qi to become straight be comparable to a weapon that was straight to begin with?

McKenzie's Azureflame spear was also a very precious spear.

"This is a divine artifact." Linley didn't hide anything.

"A divine artifact." McKenzie nodded in amazement, and then laughed loudly. "Wonderful. Linley, next I will use my ultimate attack. Be careful."

"I have a special attack that I haven't used either." Linley was very confident as well.

Right now, both men were on the ground, staring at each other.

"Haaaargh!"

McKenzie suddenly began to move. He lifted the spear in his hands, pointing it at the sky. Suddenly, with McKenzie as the focal point, an endless wave of flame began to spew out in every direction.

In the blink of an eye, within several hundred meters, everything had turned into a world of flame.

Linley was surrounded and caged in as well. His dark golden eyes watched emotionlessly. Within this World of Flames, McKenzie's image appeared everywhere, along with his spear.

Oppressive!

This World of Flames seemed to be suppressing Linley, and there was no 'imposing force' Linley could draw upon.

"Rumble..." One indistinct spear after another suddenly pierced through the air, thrusting towards Linley. Combined, they formed a seemingly very real fire dragon, which was coiling forth from the flames and roaring at Linley.

And at the same time...

Behind Linley as well, McKenzie bizarrely appeared out of nowhere as he thrust the spear in his hands toward Linley.

One in front, one from behind. Linley had nowhere to run.

"Rippling Wind!"

Linley began to move, and the Bloodviolet flexible sword in his hands suddenly transformed into countless vipers, colliding and striking against the

various spear-shadows that were attacking from all around him. Each time his sword struck against a spear, there was a thunderous boom. That astonishingly powerful fire dragon seemed to have been surrounded and wrapped around by a large number of enormous pythons, and as the pythons constricted it, it exploded violently.

“Slash!” McKenzie’s spear thrust out towards Linley from behind.

But that Bloodviolet flexible sword very nimbly and agilely curved backwards, blocking the spear. As the flexible sword bounced off the spear, Linley too immediately went flying backwards, moving farther away from McKenzie.

“Bam!” “Bam!” “Bam!” “Bam!”

To his astonishment McKenzie had discovered that the area around Linley seemed to have suddenly given birth to wild gusts of wind, while the Bloodviolet sword in Linley’s hands seemed to have turned into a violet bolt of thunder, striking in every direction. In the blink of an eye, his World of Flames had been broken open.

Linley had already located McKenzie.

“Whoosh!” “Whoosh!” “Whoosh!” The Bloodviolet sword in Linley’s hands would appear and disappear at random. In McKenzie’s eyes, all he could see were countless sword tips stabbing towards him.

It was simply too fast. So fast that McKenzie wasn’t able to block them all, and his only option was to rouse his battle-qi to defend against it.

Countless sword tips pierced against his protective layer of battle-qi, and each blow contained an astonishing amount of force. With a sudden exploding sound, that layer of battle-qi blew apart, the force of it causing the earth to rumble, creating ten terrifyingly deep canyons in the ground, dust flying everywhere.

After a long period of time, the dust finally settled down.

McKenzie’s clothes were completely ruined, unsightly beyond repair.

McKenzie glanced at Linley. Chuckling, he nodded. “I lose.”

But Linley stared suspiciously at McKenzie. “McKenzie, why were all the

spear-shadows in your world of flames so weak and illusionary? My sword easily broke every one of them. If all of those attacks were real, I would have lost.”

Linley had already reached a very high level of understanding. He could tell that those spear-shadows were definitely capable of becoming real attacks. In other words, those countless spear-shadows could all be real spears. It would have been very difficult for him to block them, if that were the case. But just then, he had easily broken every single spear-shadow.

“Haha, if all of them were real, then I would be a peak-stage Saint-level expert.” McKenzie laughed. “My current World of Flames can only reach this current level.”

“How is it that your Rippling Wind technique can be so fast? It was even more terrifying than what you were using when we started.” McKenzie asked in puzzlement.

Linley explained, “When we first started to fight, I was only borrowing the imposing force of the wind. As for the Rippling Wind technique, that was part of the insights I gained with regards to the Profound Truths of the Wind. The sword can become one with the wind, and wherever the wind is, the sword can appear.”

The Rippling Wind was indeed fast. Terrifyingly fast.

Linley was only able to develop this terrifying technique thanks to the unique properties of the Bloodviolet sword. Using Bloodviolet with this technique, it wouldn't be hard for Linley to produce over ten million sword attacks in the blink of an eye.

## The Magicite Core

“Wherever the wind is, the sword can appear!”

Hearing these words, McKenzie was truly shocked. If he hadn't personally sparred with Linley, upon hearing these words, McKenzie would have taken them to be an empty boast. But just then, he himself had sensed the terrifying speed of those sword attacks, which had reached a speed that was ten, no, a hundred times faster than his own.

There was no way for him to block them, and so he had to rely on his battle-qi to defend against it.

To be forced to such a state, McKenzie was thoroughly convinced of Linley's superiority.

“Linley, you spoke of merging and becoming one with the wind. I... do not understand what you mean,” McKenzie said, frowning slightly.

Linley didn't try to hide anything. Laughing, he said, “McKenzie, you must understand, the wind itself is invisible and formless, but it can be both as fast as the lightning, or utterly slow and calm. My ‘Profound Truths of the Wind’ is, in truth, based on that small amount of insight I have gained into the Laws of the Wind.”

“The Laws.” McKenzie's eyes were filled with admiration. “The highest of truths.”

Every sort of elemental Law was extremely profound and mysterious. In truth, if one could master and understand a sufficiently large amount of one of these Laws, then one's soul would totally merge with the ‘elemental world’ and crystallize into a divine spark, allowing one to reach the Deity level.

As for Linley, he had just barely scratched the surface of these Laws.

Whether it was the ‘Profound Truths of the Earth’ or the ‘Profound Truths of

the Wind', Linley had only understood the smallest portion, like a single drop of water in an endless sea.

"By merging with the wind, my sword can appear wherever the wind is. But this sort of technique has a very high requirement with regards to the composition of the sword itself, because it requires the sword to almost instantly move from one place to another, causing the sword to come under enormous stress." Linley smirked. "If there was no such requirement or drawback, then wouldn't I be able to essentially teleport myself around by merging into the wind?"

Linley could indeed merge with the wind, but his body simply couldn't handle the amount of speed and stress it would suffer from teleportation-like movement speeds.

"Haha, teleportation, eh? Even Deity-level combatants are not capable of such a thing." McKenzie sighed.

No matter how powerful an expert was, even one such as the War God, they could at most move as fast as lightning. No one was capable of teleportation. Although people often talked about 'teleportation', that was just how the weak described the high-speed movements of Saint-level experts who did battle.

Saint-level experts were simply too fast. Those ordinary people could only see that the Saint-level experts were sometimes here, and other times there. They took this to be teleportation.

In truth, there was no such thing as teleportation.

Even if there was, it wasn't something that the likes of the War God was capable of.

"McKenzie, what about that technique of yours? What was that all about? Just now, I couldn't sense you at all. I felt as though all of those countless spear-shadows surrounding me were real," Linley stared at McKenzie questioningly as well.

When Saint-level experts sparred, it did indeed help them learn more and faster. Naturally, Linley wouldn't give up this opportunity by being shy about asking.

McKenzie laughed. “Actually, this sort of attack is a fairly common one. Generally speaking, most peak-stage Saint-level combatants use such an attack.”

“Oh?” Linley looked at McKenzie in astonishment.

“In the past, during the War God’s battle with the High Priest, many experts witnessed the terrifying power of a Deity’s “Godrealm”. Afterwards, many Saint-level combatants wanted to create an attack that could duplicate the effect of a Godrealm. In truth, that attack I used just now was a sort of ‘Pseudo-Realm’ attack.” McKenzie laughed at himself self-deprecatingly.

Linley continued to look at McKenzie.

What Linley wanted to know was the underlying principles behind this sort of attack.

“Actually, this sort of attack is extremely wasteful,” McKenzie said emotionally. “For example, I myself am a practitioner walking on the path of understanding the ‘Laws of Fire’.”

Every Saint-level practitioner had their own paths to understanding the various Laws. Only, they would all focus on different types of Laws.

“This attack, the ‘Pseudo-Realm’, basically forces one to blast out all of one’s battle-qi, while at the same time summoning and igniting all of the surrounding area’s fire elemental essence, causing everything within a hundred meters to turn into a sea of flame. Because my own battle-qi has merged with the fire elemental essence, this causes the entire sea of flame to be imprinted with my own aura, making you unable to detect where my true body is located.”

“However, my control is insufficient. I can only control my battle-qi to form a single true attack from the elemental essence. If I were able to control all the other spear-shadows and change them into real attacks, you would be in a great deal of trouble.” McKenzie laughed.

Linley was beginning to understand.

The underlying principles of this technique were quite simple. The difficulty lay in the control of elemental essence.



For example, ‘impose’ was just borrowing on the natural force of the heavens, but this ‘Pseudo-Realm’ was different. It required complete control! Generally speaking, it was impossible for a Saint-level to fully control all the elemental essence in a given area. This was something only a Deity-level expert could perform.

But Saint-level experts were very intelligent. By blasting out all of their battle-qi, they allowed their battle-qi to merge with the elemental essence, then used it to control the elemental essence. Although it required them to use a large amount of effort and battle-qi, they were able to just barely create this ‘Pseudo-Realm’.

But despite that, its control over elemental essence was far inferior to that of the ‘Godrealm’ technique.

Linley had personally experienced how the King of Killers, Cesar, had used the power of his Godrealm to freeze both Linley as well as the peak-stage Saint-level expert, Stehle, in the blink of an eye, causing them both to be unable to move.

That sort of control over elemental essence was absolutely terrifying.

Compared to it, the ‘Pseudo-Realm’ was far weaker.

“This Pseudo-Realm does have its strong points. Although it consumes a huge amount of battle-qi, as long as one is at a high level of understanding, one can suddenly create ten million attacks out of nowhere. In addition, it also allows one to hide one’s body. It is more powerful than my own ‘Rippling Wind’ technique. The only weakness is that it uses up too much battle-qi, and is very wasteful.”

But then, Linley quickly shook his head.

“No. This is simply a clever little technique to mimic the Godrealm ability. Although it is a test of a person’s ability to control elemental essence, it has virtually nothing to do with a person’s actual level of understanding with regards to the Laws.” Linley believed that this was definitely a wrong path of training, not a correct path.

Earth, fire, wind, water. Each had its own Laws, such as the Laws of the Earth.

A complete, perfect set of elemental Laws was like a complete, perfectly constructed building. Every single brick in this building was akin to one of the profound mysteries of the Laws. Each Law contained within it countless numbers of profound mysteries.

Linley had gained insight into one particular mystery, and had developed his vibrational attack technique. This should be considered one of the higher-class mysteries of the Laws of the Earth.

After this battle, both Linley as well as McKenzie were now in absolutely tattered clothes. But of course, only Linley's pants were torn. The two changed their clothes, then smiling, left the mountain.

"Squeaaaaak!" On Linley's shoulders, Bebe delightedly squeaked at McKenzie, baring his fangs. It was as though Bebe was mocking McKenzie for losing.

"You little rascal. Jeeze..." McKenzie laughed involuntarily.

Linley laughed as well. Per Linley's instructions, Bebe wasn't giving any sign that he was at the Saint level of power. Only when it was absolutely necessary would Linley reveal this trump card of his.

Under the moonlight, the two Saint-level experts chatted and laughed on the way back to the provincial capital of Basil.

The next morning, no matter how McKenzie tried to persuade him, Linley was still determined to head off to the imperial capital. Out of options, McKenzie personally sent them off, escorting them for over a hundred kilometers. By nightfall, the group arrived at a harbor at the Yulan river.

Early on, McKenzie had sent people to arrange a three-story boat for Linley at the harbor.

"Mr. McKenzie, there's no need to escort us any further."

By now, Linley was on extremely good terms with McKenzie. This McKenzie had escorted them for a hundred kilometers, all the way to the port. How could Linley not be grateful for McKenzie's kindness and courtesy?

"Brother Linley, I really hate the fact that I can't spend a few more months with you. However, you are in a rush to meet with your little brother, so I know

it isn't appropriate for me to insist on you staying either," McKenzie said seriously. "Brother Linley, have a safe trip."

As McKenzie watched, Linley's group boarded this ship, and then, following the tides of the Yulan river, began to sail south.

The Yulan river was extremely wide, and the river waters were turgid.

This ship was much finer than the ship Linley had previously rented. In addition, the skills of its sailors were much higher as well. Although they went down the same general direction with the flow of the river, they were clearly moving much faster than before.

"This is the Yulan River? It really is huge." Barker and his brothers were standing at the railing, staring at the roiling waves, their eyes shining.

Barker and his brothers came from the Eighteen Northern Duchies. They were used to seeing the land covered in snow and ice, but had never seen such an enormous river.

Rebecca and Leena were very excited as well, while Jenne chatted with them about the Yulan river.

Right now, Bebe and Haeru, the two magical beasts, were growling in conversation to each other.

Linley knew that ever since Bebe had reached the Saint-rank, Haeru had felt all the more ashamed in front of Bebe. After all, Haeru was a peak-stage magical beast of the ninth rank. He was used to being proud and arrogant. But now, he had suffered a severe mental blow due to Bebe.

"Haeru, come with me."

Linley glanced at Haeru, then headed directly to the second floor of the ship. Bebe and Haeru immediately followed after him. Right now, the second floor of the ship was fairly empty.

"Boss, why'd you have Haeru come over?" Bebe suddenly asked. While outsiders were present, Bebe didn't dare to speak, but now, with no one else present, Bebe was going to have a good, spoken chat. Bebe actually very much enjoyed speaking in human tongues.

Haeru's cold eyes stared questioningly at Linley.

He didn't know what his master, Linley, was planning to do.

"Haeru, in the past, didn't you and Bebe both want that darkness-type Saint-level magicite core?" Linley laughed.

Hearing these words, the intelligent Haeru instantly understood what Linley intended to do, and his eyes immediately lit up.

"Boss, you are giving him the Saint-level magicite core?" Bebe was able to guess it as well.

"What, are you opposed?" Linley looked at Bebe.

Bebe happily shook his little head, then looked at Haeru pityingly as he said mockingly, "Of course not. Although Haeru is sometimes a little bit cocky, he's still a fine fellow. In the future, he'll be following me, right? I'm a Saint-level magical beast. If my followers are too weak, that'll be really embarrassing to me."

Listening to Bebe's words, Linley couldn't control his laughter from coming out.

"Enough. Haeru, eat this Saint-level magicite core, then go to your room. I won't let anyone disturb you." With a flip of his hand, Linley retrieved that darkness-style Saint-level magicite core he had acquired so long ago.

Thinking back to the affairs of his youth, and that terrifying battle between the Armored Razorback Wurm and the Saint-level Violet Tattooed Bear, Linley couldn't help but secretly sigh.

Time had gone by. The current Linley most likely had the strength to fight head on against the Armored Razorback Wurm or the Saint-level Violet Tattooed Bear. But back then, all he could do was hide.

"Bebe, you go to Haeru's room as well. Help me keep an eye on him. If anything important and out of the ordinary happens when Haeru is trying to break through, immediately inform me." Linley was concerned about any side effects Haeru might have from eating the Saint-level magicite core.

"Got it, Boss." Bebe puffed out his chest, saluting.

Linley tossed the darkness-style Saint-level magicite to Haeru. Haeru opened his jaws, catching it in his mouth as he cast a grateful look at Linley. Given his level of intelligence, Haeru knew exactly how valuable a Saint-level magicite core was. What's more, it wasn't a guarantee that he would break through upon eating the Saint-level magicite core. He did have a chance of failure.

But Linley still had given him the Saint-level magicite core.

"I hope Haeru won't disappoint me." Watching Haeru and Bebe enter Haeru's room, Linley secretly sighed. And then, he once more returned to the main deck, enjoying the view of the turgid waters of the Yulan river.

The ship continued to head south through the Yulan river at high speed as it had previously. As for the Blackcloud Panther, Haeru, he was beginning to charge towards the barrier between him and the Saint level.

## Yet Another Saint-Level

A Saint-level magicite core contained the essence of a Saint-level magical beast's magical power. A Saint-level magicite core was something that was very hard to consume, and which would take a significant amount of time to do so. In the past, because Linley had the legendary 'Dragonblood Warrior bloodline', his special bloodline eventually dissolved and absorbed that ninth-rank magicite core of the Armored Razorback Wurm.

But even after he had dissolved and absorbed that magicite core of the ninth rank, the residual energy of the core remained in Linley's body, alongside his Dragonblood. It hadn't been totally mastered and utilized by Linley.

"As the current continues to take us south, from here to the Southwest Administrative Province, we will have travelled more than three thousand kilometers. Such an enormous distance will take several days, even though we are following the current," Linley said to himself while looking at the roiling waves.

Who knows if a few days would be enough for Haeru to finish dissolving and absorbing that Saint-level magicite core. Linley himself didn't have any experience, of course, when it came to the subject of peak-stage magical beasts of the ninth rank absorbing magicite cores.

"Gates, why are you going back inside? The scenery around the Yulan river is pretty good," the third brother, Hazer, said in a loud voice.

Of the Barker brothers, four were standing in front of the railing, enjoying the beautiful sights of the Yulan river. Only Gates was heading back into the cabin.

"Big bro and second bro have already made their breakthroughs, third bro. You guys can watch, but I'm not in the mood. I don't want to waste time. I'll go back and train," Gates replied back loudly.

Hazer was caught off-guard.

Linley turned to stare at Gates in surprise. Right now, only two of the five had mastered the level of ‘wielding something heavy as though it were light’. One was Barker, while the other was Gates. Gates was a very proud person. Linley knew this quite well.

“Gates is right.” The fourth brother, Boone, nodded as well. “I will go train as well.”

The third brother, Hazer, followed Boone into the cabin as well, leaving behind just Barker and Ankh. The two exchange glances, then began to laugh.

“Second bro, you have to work hard. If Gates makes a breakthrough, he’ll be more powerful than you,” Barker laughed as he spoke to Ankh.

Ankh nodded, drawing out the two giant, long-handled greataxes on his back. “I’m going to the rear deck to train with my weapons.”

“I’ll go with you.” Barker drew out his own long-handled greataxes as well.

The long-handled greataxes of Barker and his brothers were quite astonishing. These might be the heaviest weapons that existed in the modern world. 5300 pounds each, they were quite suited to the Undying Warriors, famed amongst the Supreme Warriors for their strength.

Zassler laughed as he stroked his white beard. “Those five brothers really have become quite hard-working. They make this old man feel a bit ashamed.”

But despite saying that, Zassler continued to admire the local scenery.

At Zassler’s current level, what he needed was a flash of insight. Training alone wouldn’t provide that.

Smiling, Linley stood on the front of the ship. Slowly, Linley closed his eyes. The wind over the wide Yulan river was quite strong, and it buffeted Linley’s robes, causing Linley to sway ever so slightly.

Linley had completely become one with the wind, and could sense the movements of the wind elemental essence.



Time flowed on like water. In the blink of an eye, four days had passed, and the ship had entered the domain of the Southwest Administrative Province. In two days or so, they should be able to reach the harbor they were aiming for.

“Big brother Linley is training?” Jenne asked quietly.

Rebecca and Leena both shook her heads, indicating that they didn’t know.

Right now, it was late at night, but Linley continued to stand on the deck of the ship, his eyes closed. If someone thought Linley was asleep, though, they would have been wrong. Because every so often, a flash of violet light would pass by Linley’s body.

The difference was, this time, Linley wasn’t aiming for speed.

When he was training in the ‘Rippling Wind’ technique, Linley’s body was always surrounded by innumerable sword flashes. But right now, there was just one violet flash at a time.

No one knew what Linley was training.

“Wielding something heavy as though it were light. Wielding something light as though it were heavy. It can be as fierce as the storm winds, or as gentle as the spring wind.” After having trained for so long, Linley was finally gaining some insight with regards to the second stage of the Profound Truths of the Wind.

Profound Truths of the Wind, stage one – Rippling Wind. This relied on pursuing speed to the highest levels.

In truth, once a technique’s speed reached a certain level, its attack power would also be extremely powerful. This was the reason why Linley could break through McKenzie’s defense in an instant.

But the second stage of the Profound Truths of the Wind that Linley was developing was a very unique type of attack.

When he struck out with his sword, sometimes the sword would flash like lightning, while other times it would be as heavy as a mountain. In truth, this sword attack was very fast, but it gave the impression of constantly rippling and fluctuating between being fast and being slow.



That was the intention of this technique.

“Profound Truths of the Wind, stage two – Tempos of the Wind.”

A smile was on Linley’s face. He slashed through the air with Bloodviolet, and when it did, he gave off two distinctly different impressions; one was that this attack was as fierce and explosive as the winds of a hurricane, while the other was that it was as gentle and calm as the spring wind that blew through the willows.

One technique with two opposing rhythms.

“These two opposing tempos, when merged together, can give birth to a blade made of air.” Linley continued to pursue his goal of using his sword to create the ‘Dimensional Edge’ type of attack.

This ‘Tempos of the Wind’ was a single-target attack.

Although its power was far inferior to the ‘Dimensional Edge’ spell, which was so terrifyingly powerful that it could cut through the walls of reality itself, the power of the ‘Tempo of the Wind’ had already exceeded that of the ‘Rippling Wind’ technique.

This was especially true in one-on-one combat.

“This second stage of the Profound Truths of the Wind, the Tempos of the Wind technique, should be capable of posing a threat to peak-stage Saint-level experts.” When Linley had sparred with McKenzie, he had gained a better understanding of what peak-stage Saint-level experts were like. “However, this ‘Tempos of the Wind’ technique is most likely one of the more basic mysteries of the Laws of the Wind that I have gained some insight into.

Linley had to admit that the Tempos of the Wind was an extremely powerful technique.

But the ‘Tempos of the Wind’ could only be considered the most basic, rudimentary level of the ‘Dimensional Edge’ spell. It was still a material, physical attack, which the opponent could use battle-qi or armor to defend against.

But the resonating vibrations produced by the ‘Profound Truths of the Earth’ was clearly a higher level of attack. Those vibrations didn’t need to break the

opponent's armor; it could simply bypass it and attack the internals directly.

“To an ordinary Saint-level expert, using Bloodviolet should be enough.” Linley chuckled. “Unless, of course, I encounter some particularly powerful peak-stage Saint-level experts.”

Peak-stage Saint-level experts had varying levels of power as well.

For example, Stehle and the Holy Emperor were both peak-stage Saint-level experts, but Stehle was much weaker than the Holy Emperor. After all, the Holy Emperor trained in Oracular Magic.

Or for example, the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, reputed to be the most powerful Saint-level in existence. To date, not a single expert had been able to overcome Haydson.

Of course, there were people who had never competed against Haydson, such as the Holy Emperor, or the Dark Patriarch. They didn't dare compete against him, because their exalted statuses meant they simply couldn't afford to lose. Unless they were completely certain of victory, they wouldn't compete.



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The fifth day on the ship, at around noon, just as Linley and the others were eating lunch and chatting casually, suddenly...

“Boss, come quick!” Bebe's urgent voice rang out in Linley's mind.

Without hesitating slightly, Linley immediately began to run towards Haeru's private room. “You guys, keep eating,” he instructed as he entered Haeru's room.

Closing the door, Linley stared in astonishment.

“Rumble.” It seemed as though beneath the Blackcloud Panther's skin, there were small mice running around, as his muscles and flesh constantly twitched. A black light surrounded his entire body. His eyes closed, the Blackcloud Panther constantly moaned in pain.

At the same time, the patterns on the Blackcloud Panther's body were

beginning to change as well. Sometimes his four limbs would turn snow white, while later they would turn totally black. Sometimes, his entire body would turn snow white...

Bizarre.

The most astonishing thing was that the Blackcloud Panther's head was covered with two circulating gusts of blue and black energy.

"Boss, Haeru's been like this for a while. I don't know what to do either," Bebe said with concern.

Linley looked at Haeru.

"Haeru," Linley said to him mentally.

"Ma... master. I'm fine!" Haeru's agonized voice rang out in Linley's mind. Linley forced himself to suppress his anxiety, just watching and waiting.

Linley's attention was focused on Haeru's head. The most important part of a magical beast was their head; their magicite cores were there, after all.

In the air above and around the Blackcloud Panther's head, those two streams of blue and black energy continued to spin about at high speed. Sometimes, the black energy would expand, but then a moment later, the amount of black energy would decrease, and the blue energy would increase in amount.

This repeated over and over!

And then, those two gusts of energy suddenly emitted a terrifying amount of force. Even Linley was shocked. If these two gusts of energy were to explode, most likely the entire boat would be transformed into rubble.

"Rumble." Linley's body immediately became covered with a layer of black scales. Without hesitating in the slightest, Linley immediately transformed into his Dragonform.

If he wasn't in his Dragonblood Warrior form, if these two gusts of energy were to explode, Linley wouldn't be able to take it. Linley's remorseless, dark golden eyes stared at the Blackcloud Panther, his gaze as sharp as daggers.

Suddenly, those two gusts of blue and black energy returned to their earlier

state of calmness as they directly entered the Blackcloud Panther's skull. And then, the Blackcloud Panther's body grew calm as well, and the patterns on his body stopped changing.

Linley let out his held breath.

Right now, the Blackcloud Panther's body was covered with beads of blood. That transformation just now had been a transformation in both physical and spiritual terms.

The Blackcloud Panther opened his eyes, staring with grateful joy at Linley.

"You succeeded?" A hint of a smile was on Linley's lips as he immediately returned to his human form. Only, his upper body clothes were ruined once again.

"Yes, Master." These growling, cold words in the human tongue came forth from the Blackcloud Panther's lips.

A faint gust of blue light appeared on the Blackcloud Panther's body, gently wiping off all of the beads of blood, restoring him once more to his normal, glossy black color.

"Not bad." Bebe floated over to the Blackcloud Panther, chortling. "It's a good thing that you didn't waste that Saint-level magicite core. Otherwise..."

Haeru looked away.

He could guess that if he had failed, Bebe would have given him a thorough beating.

"Enough. Let's all head out," Linley said after changing into another set of clothes.

Because of how his Dragonform transformation ruined his clothes, Linley had stored over a hundred set of clothes in his interspatial ring. But of course, to the current Linley, the amount of money it cost to buy clothes was a miniscule amount.



On the sixth morning they spent on the Yulan river, the boat finally reached the harbor they were headed towards.

“We finally arrived.” Rebecca, Leena, and Jenne, the three ladies, all stared excitedly with bright eyes. But just at this moment, from the rear deck, the sound of loud, explosive, excited laughter could be heard.

“Hrm?”

Linley, Zassler, and the others both turned to stare at the rear deck, where Barker and his brothers had been training this entire time.

“Barker, the five of you, hurry on over. We’re about to reach the shore,” Rebecca called out loudly.

“Coming, coming.” Barker and his brothers walked over, laughing loudly. All of their eyes were on Linley, and there was a look of irrepressible joy on their faces.

Seeing that look on the faces of Barker and his brothers, Linley began to wonder. “These five brothers... can it be... can it be that yet another has broken through?”

Right now, of the five brothers, the oldest brother, Barker, and the second brother, Ankh, had reached the Saint level in power. The others, in their human forms, were still only at the peak of the eighth rank.

“Lord.” Barker’s face was filled with excitement. “Gates has broken through as well!”

“Gates has broken through?”

Although he had predicted it, Linley still felt a surge of joy and excitement. He couldn’t help but to turn and look at Gates. The usually loud and boisterous Gates was currently just scratching his head and beaming happily.

When they had left Basil and boarded the ship, Linley’s forces consisted of four Saint-level combatants; Linley, Bebe, Barker, and Ankh. But upon landing, Linley’s forces now consisted of six Saint-level experts.

Not a single Empire would dare be discourteous to such a terrifying force.

Taking a look behind at the Blackcloud Panther Haeru, then at the beaming

Gates, Linley shouted with heroic gusto, “Haha, everyone, disembark! Let’s go! We are heading to the imperial capital!”

“Let’s go!” the five brothers also roared happily.

## Blumer's Request

Linley's group disembarked at the port, beginning to travel in the direction of the imperial capital. But as this port was in the central region of the Southwest Administrative Province, from there to the center of the O'Brien Administrative Province was a journey of four thousand kilometers after factoring in the curving roads.

Such a long distance would take at least ten days or half a month, even if one rode horses at full gallop the entire time.

On the road to the imperial capital of Channe, many people were talking about the rising star of the Empire; Blumer Akerlund.

"I hear that anyone who becomes the personal disciple of the War God has the possibility of becoming a Saint-level combatant eventually. Blumer is so lucky."

"What do you mean, 'has the possibility'? It is guaranteed."

In many of the common restaurants of the imperial capital, the drinking men would loudly chat about this subject. "That day, when it was announced that Blumer would be the personal disciple, I was there myself. Three of the personal disciples of the War God came, and all three were Saint-level experts."

"Not all of his students are necessarily at the Saint level. The War God has accepted a total of twenty-seven disciples, and the first one was accepted over five thousand years ago. He might have died by now. And there are the other personal disciples who have disappeared. Who knows if they all reached the Saint level or not?" someone else disputed.

"You don't believe in the power of the War God?"

"Of course I believe in the War God, but are his personal disciples necessarily that formidable?" The man pursed his lips. "Training requires natural talent.

Look at the Prodigy Sword Saint, Olivier. He trained on his own and yet still became so powerful. How many of the disciples of the War God can compete with Olivier?”

“You aren’t Olivier. You aren’t qualified to speak poorly of Blumer. What’s more, Lord Olivier and Lord Blumer are siblings, you know!”

That year, when Olivier had entered the Saint level, he had easily defeated the Stellar Sword Saint, Dillon. Thus, everyone believed that Olivier already possessed the power of a peak-stage Saint-level combatant.

Although Dillon himself was only a mid-stage Saint-level expert, if Olivier wasn’t at the peak-stage, how could he so easily defeat Dillon?

“I hear that tomorrow, His Imperial Majesty is going to hold a personal audience with Blumer and confer upon him a title of nobility,” someone suddenly said.

“I’ve heard this as well. Tomorrow, many of the nobles of the imperial capital will be visiting the ‘Martial Palace’.

The O’Brien Empire was an Empire that highly valued martial strength as well as their military. Since the founding Emperor of the Empire was the War God, it was natural that this was the case. Whenever the Emperor of the Empire wished to meet with his ministers, he would summon them to the Martial Palace.

The Martial Palace was named by the War God himself.

The next day.

Many nobles of the imperial capital got up very early this day. They dressed formally, then one after another, entered their carriages and headed towards the imperial palace. Today, the Emperor was going to confer a title of nobility on Blumer. This was a major affair.

Every single personal disciple of the War God would receive a title of nobility from the Empire.

For an Emperor to have the chance to do so even a single time was already quite lucky. After all, in the past five thousand years, there had been over a



hundred Emperors, but only twenty-seven personal disciples.

The rank of the title was already set. It was never as high as a 'Duke'; it was usually a 'Marquis'.

"After becoming the personal disciple of the War God, the noble rank conferred to Blumer is even higher than the one I received," Wharton casually thought to himself while riding in his carriage.

Personal disciples had a very exalted status. After all, anyone qualified to become a personal disciple was almost certainly capable of reaching the Saint level.

What's more, they had the backing of the War God himself. Naturally, no one dared to offend him. And if you offended a single personal disciple, all the other personal disciples would possibly appear as well.

Upon reaching the palace gates, Wharton left his carriage and casually headed inside alongside the other nobles.

The Martial Palace usually only had around a hundred or so senior ministers present for morning court, but today was a special occasion. Many nobles who usually did not need to attend morning court were present, and thus a very high number of people were there.

Ordinary imperial nobles weren't even qualified to join this ceremony. Those who did participate were all people with power and authority. As for Wharton, he was a Count who had received his title of nobility from the Emperor himself, and thus he was qualified to participate.

The Martial Palace normally seemed very large and empty, but now that it was filled with over eight hundred nobles and senior ministers, it didn't seem very large at all. People were everywhere.

"Blumer, congratulations."

In the center of the palace, many people were surrounding Blumer, warmly congratulating him. Blumer's older brother was a Saint-level expert, while Blumer in the future would most likely become a Saint-level expert as well. Even the most powerful of clans wouldn't be so foolish as to anger a Saint-level expert.

Blumer quietly nodded in response to each of the nobles.

“Worldly power?” Blumer didn’t care about it.

In his heart, the one he truly worshipped was his older brother, Olivier. Even the sword techniques that he utilized had been developed, then taught to him by Olivier.

Ever since he was young, Olivier had displayed astonishing amounts of talent, and he always protected Blumer as well. If anyone dared to mistreat Blumer, Olivier would definitely avenge his little brother.

“Big brother is training alone on that mountain peak. I wonder what level he has now reached,” Blumer silently wondered to himself.

Nearly nine years ago, his older brother had entered the Saint level and easily defeated the Stellar Sword Saint, Dillon. At that time, there were some who already believed that Olivier possessed the power of a peak-stage Saint-level expert.

But Olivier didn’t accept any gifts or titles. He just left by himself, continuing his training.

Three years ago, Olivier began training alone in a barren mountain outside the imperial capital. No one knew how powerful Olivier, who nine years ago already possessed the power of a peak-stage Saint-level, had now become.

“Perhaps one day, my older brother will reach the Deity level as well.” In Blumer’s heart, his older brother was an indisputable genius. There was nothing his older brother could not accomplish.

And indeed, this was the case.

Olivier was such a genius that even the War God had sighed in praise and wanted to accept him as a disciple.

“His Imperial Majesty has arrived.” Many nobles noticed that the Emperor had arrived, and they immediately returned to their designated positions, forming neat rows as they paid their respects to the Emperor.

The Emperor of the O’Brien Empire, Johann O’Brien, was a fairly just Emperor, aside from that little problem of being biased.

Johann was fairly tall, standing 1.9 meters high. Even after becoming Emperor, he continued to train his battle-qi, causing his body to be powerful and sturdy. Dressed in his imperial robes, he sat on his imperial throne, looking down at everyone.

“Haha, where is Blumer?” Emperor Johann laughed as he looked down at his subjects. Today, Johann was extremely happy. Neither his father nor his grandfather had the opportunity to confer a rank of nobility on one of the personal disciples of the War God, but he did.

This sort of opportunity would happen only once in a lifetime.

With nearly eight hundred people standing before him, Johann couldn't immediately see where Blumer was. Blumer strode out from the crowd. Standing in the center of the palace, he bowed respectfully. “Blumer pays his respects to you, Imperial Majesty.”

Johann carefully inspected Blumer, then sighed in praise. “You are indeed incredible. Who would have expected that the Akerlund clan would suddenly produce two geniuses? You are not inferior to your elder brother at all.”

A hint of a smile was on Blumer's face.

Whenever others put him on the same level as his older brother, Blumer felt very proud.

“We are very happy that you are able to become the personal disciple of the War God. Today, We shall bequeath unto you the hereditary noble title of Marquis, a manor on Boulder Street, a hundred guards, a hundred maids, and a hundred thousand gold coins,” Johann said loudly.

Everyone stared jealously at Blumer.

Generally speaking, with each generation, the noble rank of Marquis would be lowered by one rank. If future descendants were incompetent, after a few generations, they would be commoners again and the noble rank would be lost.

But hereditary noble titles were different. They never dropped in rank. A hereditary rank of Marquis was far more important than even most ordinary Dukedoms. The Empire had many dukes, over a hundred. But very few of them were hereditary.

“Thank you, your Imperial Majesty.” Blumer bowed respectfully.

Johann nodded in satisfaction. Actually, this gift was already pre-determined. Every personal disciple of the War God was given a Marquisdom, and in each case it was a hereditary title.

Amidst the crowd of nobles and senior ministers, Wharton looked at Blumer, standing proudly in the center.

Previously, he had lost out to Blumer when the War God’s College was selecting honorary disciples. The gifts the Emperor had previously given Wharton was the hereditary title of Count, fifty guards, fifty maids, and fifty thousand gold coins. Clearly, Blumer’s gift was a level higher.

Wharton didn’t care too much about worldly goods.

But in his heart, Wharton had already considered Blumer as an opponent. “Although he is nearly ten years older than me, he’s only an ordinary person. I am a Dragonblood Warrior. These two cancel out. No matter what, I won’t let myself be weaker than him.” Wharton was extremely proud and stubborn.

But he hid these feelings in his heart.

“Blumer, today, We are in an extremely good mood. You are the first personal disciple that We have conferred a title of nobility on after We succeeded to the throne. Haha. Tell me, is there anything you desire? So long as it is reasonable, We will definitely agree,” Johann’s voice rang out in the Martial Palace.

Everyone’s gazes turned towards Blumer.

Actually, these words from Johann were just a form of courtesy. Historically speaking, the vast majority of personal disciples would say something like, “Thank you for your kindness, your Imperial Majesty.” They wouldn’t actually request anything.

“Your Imperial Majesty, your servant does indeed have a boon to request,” Blumer said.

Wharton stared at Blumer with a bit of surprise.

“Speak.” Johann magnanimously waved his hand.

Blumer bowed before speaking. “Your Imperial Majesty, your servant has

seen the Seventh Princess, and as soon as I saw her, my heart was trapped by her. Your servant humbly begs that your Imperial Majesty give me the Seventh Princess' hand in marriage."

After he said this, everyone in the palace was stunned.

Asking to marry a princess!

This Blumer actually asked to marry a princess.

Hearing these words, Wharton felt his head grow dizzy. He shook his head, staring fixedly at Blumer in the center of the palace.

Blumer only stared quietly at the Emperor.

"Your servant humbly begs that your Imperial Majesty grant your servant's request," Blumer said again.

All the nearby nobles and senior ministers turned to look at Wharton. Who in the imperial capital didn't know about Wharton and Nina? Just a while ago, Caylan, the son of the Imperial Left Premier, had personally sought out his Imperial Majesty to inform him that he would no longer pursue the Seventh Princess.

Many people believed that Wharton and Nina would definitely be a couple.

Even Emperor Johann had been planning to select an auspicious day to have Wharton and Nina marry. But this request by Blumer caused Johann to suddenly reconsider.

Johann glanced at Wharton, who stood out in the crowd. At 2.2 meters tall, he was the tallest of the local nobles and ministers.

Chuckling, Johann said, "Blumer, We truly desire to grant you this boon as well, but We must also ask Nina what she thinks. Don't be impatient. Haha..."

"Yes, Your Imperial Majesty." Blumer didn't say anything else.

After court was adjourned, Wharton exchanged a quick stare with Blumer before the two left the Martial Palace. For Blumer to suddenly act in such a way had indeed caught Wharton off guard.

The Emperor, Johann, was taking a stroll in his flower garden. He was in a

wonderful mood.

“That Olivier cares nothing for fame or nobility. It is hard for me to recruit him. I was thinking about how to draw the Akerlund clan closer to me, but I didn’t expect... I didn’t expect...”

To Johann, Olivier, who had defeated the Stellar Sword Saint Dillon as soon as Olivier had entered the Saint-rank, was indeed a person worth building a relationship with.

And his younger brother was the personal disciple of the War God.

The Akerlund clan, in the future, would almost certainly possess two mighty Saint-level combatants.

“Olivier was so powerful upon entering the Saint level. In the future, he’ll definitely be even more astonishing. At the same time, I can’t refuse to give face to the personal disciple of the War God.” Johann frowned. “But that Wharton...”

This was the reason why Johann hadn’t immediately agreed in the Martial Palace.

Wharton and Nina were truly in love with each other.

“Wharton only has the support of the decaying Dragonblood Warrior clan, while behind Blumer is the support of the War God and Olivier.”

Johann truly did give great weight to Blumer’s position as the personal disciple of the War God.

“I’ll keep delaying for now. No rush.” Johann decided to use the same strategy he had previously used against Wharton and Caylan when they were struggling over Nina. Only, in his heart, Johann was already inclined towards Blumer.

But what the nobles of the imperial capital, Channe, did not know was that at this very moment, Linley’s group of six Saint-level experts were hastening in the direction of the imperial capital.

## The Brothers Meet

Several days had passed since Blumer received the title of Marquis.

“Milord.” The guards at the gate of the Count’s manor saluted respectfully.

Wharton seemed to have not noticed the guards at all. Not glancing at the guards in the slightest, he headed directly into his manor. The two guards looked at each other.

“The Lord Count has been really out of it the past few days. Just now, he was lost in his own world again.”

“Right. In the past, he would always smile at us and even greet us. From the looks of it, that Blumer’s request in the palace to be allowed to marry the princess had a major impact on the Lord Count.”

The news of Blumer requesting the princess’ hand in marriage had already spread throughout the capital.

Many people in the imperial capital knew about the affairs of Wharton, Seventh Princess Nina, and Blumer. In the main streets and the little alleyways, in the hotels and the restaurants, this topic could often be heard being discussed.

“Wharton, what’s wrong?” a voice rang out.

Wharton turned to see who spoke to him. It was Hillman’s son, Nader. Shaking his head, Wharton let out a sigh. Nader understood. “The Seventh Princess didn’t show up?”

“Yeah.” Wharton nodded.

Wharton and the Seventh Princess often went on dates together, and the timing of these dates had become quite regular. But ever since Blumer had requested to marry Nina at the Martial Palace, Wharton had only met Nina a single time, the day after that event. The next three days, he hadn’t met Nina.

He wasn't even able to see her. Naturally, Wharton felt very miserable.

Nader felt very aggrieved on Wharton's behalf as well. Snorting, he said, "Blumer must be messed up in the head. He actually directly asked that the Seventh Princess be given to him in marriage. What the hell is wrong with him."

"It's pointless to talk about it right now." Wharton shook his head.

Just at this moment...

"Lord Count, Lord Count," a clear voice rang out from outside. Turning his head, Wharton saw that the speaker was the personal hand-servant of the Imperial Seventh Princess, Lucy.

"Let her in," Wharton said immediately.

The guards let Lucy run in. Panting, Lucy charged straight towards Wharton. "Wharton, the Princess has been ordered to remain in the palace by his Imperial Majesty and is not to leave the palace. Even I had to come up with some special ideas in order to leave. This is the letter that the Princess asked me to give you. Here, take it. I don't have any time; I have to go back now. If I go back late, it will be disastrous."

Lucy handed the letter to Wharton. Wharton stood there, stunned. Before he had a chance to even speak, Lucy ran away.

"What is his Imperial Majesty thinking?" Nader frowned, feeling rather angry.

Wharton immediately opened the envelope and withdrew the letter from it. Seeing the contents of the letter, Wharton felt a gush of warmth enter his heart, warming it.

Azure battle-qi exploded from Wharton's hands, reducing the letter to ash.

"Both a personal disciple of the War God, and the younger brother of Olivier. It seems his Imperial Majesty is favoring Blumer." Wharton saw things clearly.

If his Imperial Majesty didn't restrict Nina from coming out, Nina would go find Wharton, not Blumer.

This order clearly was meant to help Blumer.

Letting out a cold snort, Wharton felt helpless. Even Dragonformed, he would



only be at the peak of the ninth rank. How could he cause any trouble or make any waves with that bit of power?

Many days later, outside the imperial capital.

One carriage, several horses, and a pure, pitch-black panther. Atop the panther was a young man dressed in a simple robe.

“Linley, look.” Zassler, mounted on his horse, pointed at the distant, tall mountain. That mountain had multiple peaks. “That is the world-renowned War God Mountain. The War God’s College is at the top of it.”

“The War God’s College?” Linley’s eyes lit up.

The indisputably most powerful and legendary force within the Empire. The College founded by the War God who stood at the peak of the entire Yulan continent. Staring at the War God Mountain from afar, Linley couldn’t help but sigh in admiration.

“War God...”

The War God O’Brien was simply too dazzling a figure. He had not only established the mighty O’Brien Empire, he had also fought the High Priest to a stalemate over the Yulan river. That battle had made him famous, guaranteeing that he would share the same exalted status as the High Priest.

After five thousand years, no one knew how powerful the War God, who had previously been on the same level as the High Priest, was now. But the only deity that was worshipped within the O’Brien Empire was the War God. From this, one could see how venerated the War God was.

Linley’s heart was filled with a heroic urge. “There will come the day when I, too, will stand at the peak of the Yulan continent!”

Linley turned his head, no longer staring at War God Mountain. No matter how beautiful War God Mountain was, it belonged to the War God.

“The imperial capital of Channe.” Staring to the east, he could already see that enormous city, reputedly the largest in the entire continent. Channe was an enormous city. Only the imperial capital of the Yulan Empire could match it.

Channe’s architecture was simple and unadorned.

“The imperial capital of the most militarily powerful Empire in the continent. The place where experts reside. Channe.” A hint of a smile was on Linley’s lips. Underneath the dazzling sun, Linley and his team headed into Channe.

No major figures paid any special attention to this group of travelers.

But they didn’t know that these people would very soon cause earth-shaking disturbances within the O’Brien Empire.

“Haha, this really does live up to its reputation as the imperial capital of the O’Brien Empire. These streets are so wide.” Barker laughed loudly, and Linley laughed as well.

Linley’s team was walking in the center of one of the major thoroughfares of the imperial capital.

Barker and his brothers had already dismounted, as they put their weapons on their backs; those astonishing long-handled greataxes. On the way over, they had stored their long-handled greataxes within Linley’s interspatial ring. After all, the greataxes were simply too heavy; the horses couldn’t carry them.

“What muscular men.”

Many people in the imperial capital parted in front of this team. Barker and his brothers were simply too physically awe-inspiring. All of them were around 2.2 meters tall, had massive bear-like waists, and were so muscular they seemed inhuman. What’s more, on their backs they carried those enormous long-handled greataxes, which gleamed with a cold metal light.

Even if those long-handled greataxes were made solely from steel, they would weigh at least a thousand pounds. But from the coloration of those greataxes, clearly they were not ordinary weapons. Would someone who was weak dare wield such heavy weapons?

And that sleek, glossy black panther, who didn’t have any hint of discoloration whatsoever?

Nobody in the imperial capital had ever seen such a panther. This was because after the Blackcloud Panther had reached the Saint level, it had the ability to easily change the colors of its fur.

“Boulder Street.” Linley knew where Wharton was staying, and everyone present hastened towards the East Channe’s Boulder Street.

“I wager that Lord Blumer will definitely be able to marry Princess Nina.”

Linley suddenly came to a halt, turning his head to stare at a nearby restaurant. Linley was frowning. “Nina? That Nina which Wharton likes? Wasn’t it someone called Caylan who was competing with Wharton? What does Blumer have to do with this?”

Linley knew who Blumer was.

When Wharton had taken part in the competition to become an honorary disciple, in the end, Blumer had been victorious.

“Nonsense. I’m willing to bet that Lord Wharton will be the one to marry Princess Nina. Princess Nina and Lord Wharton have been together for a long time now.”

“Hard to say. Look at Lord Blumer’s current status; he’s the War God’s personal disciple.”

“Lord?” Barker said in a quiet voice.

Linley stood there silently for a while.

Blumer was the younger brother of Olivier. He had actually become the personal disciple of the War God? And it seemed that he had asked the Emperor for Nina’s hand in marriage.

Barker and the others looked at Linley.

“Let’s go,” Linley said.

Linley’s group arrived at Boulder Street. Every single manor lining Boulder Street belonged to a noble clan, and thus Boulder Street was not very crowded.

Walking in the empty Boulder Street, Linley carefully inspected the signs on every single manor.

“Up ahead.” Linley’s eyes lit up.

The two guards who were engaged in idle conversation suddenly noticed Linley and the others walking over. They immediately became alert, especially

after seeing the enormous bodies of Barker and his brothers.

“These guys are definitely as tall and as muscular as the Lord Count.” The two guards were somewhat shocked.

“Who are you?” one of the guards, summoning all his courage, called out bravely.

Gates was the first to reply loudly, “Is this Count Wharton’s residence?”

“Yes.” The guard nodded.

Hearing these words, Linley felt his heart tremble in excitement as it sped up. How many years had it been? Wharton had left when he was six years old. In a few days, exactly seventeen years would have gone by.

Seventeen years!

Smiling, Linley said, “Go deliver the message that his big brother, Linley, has arrived.” Hearing these words, those two guards were very surprised. Count Wharton’s older brother? They had never heard of such a person.

But these two guards had good judgment. They could immediately tell how formidable this group was. Without daring to say much else, one guard bowed. “Please wait here a moment. I’ll go make the report.”

Linley took a deep breath, letting himself calm down.

“Linley, this is your little brother’s residence?” Zassler walked over, laughing. “Looks like your little brother has done quite well for himself in the imperial capital.”

Linley couldn’t help but feel extremely proud as well.

Housekeeper Hiri and Hillman were currently chatting over some wine, but suddenly, the guard ran in at high speed. “Lord Hillman, a group of people have just arrived. Their leader claims he is Wharton’s older brother, and that his name is Linley.”

“Smash!” The winecup in Housekeeper Hiri’s hands fell to the floor, smashing into pieces.

“Linley!”

Housekeeper Hiri and Hillman simultaneously rose to their feet. They stared at each other, wide-eyed and filled with shock and joy.

“Go, go, fast! Go inform the Lord Count!” Hiri immediately instructed.

And then, Hiri and Hillman both charged towards the outside of the manor at high speed. Seeing how Housekeeper Hiri had totally lost his usual bearing, the guard realized what a momentous affair this was, and he immediately ran to the training fields.

Soon, Hiri and Hillman arrived at the front courtyard. Arriving before the main gate, they actually slowed down as they looked forward carefully.

They saw five terrifyingly muscular men. Those long-handled greataxes on their backs alone made the two of them tremble. By the side of those five men, there was a skinny, skeletal old man whose shadowy green eyes were filled with a terrifying aura.

Besides the old man were three beautiful girls, pleasing to behold.

And at the very front...

“Linley!” Hillman was the first to speak. Housekeeper Hiri was still carefully inspecting Linley. After a while, he suddenly recognized who Linley was. He cried out in surprise and joy, “Young master Linley.”

Linley, who was in the middle of a conversation with Zassler, turned his head.

Grandpa Hiri looked just as he had in Linley’s memories, with that wine-reddened nose of his. And Uncle Hillman was there as well. Looking at them, Linley found that he was totally unable to suppress the excitement in his heart. “Grandpa Hiri, Uncle Hillman.” Linley rushed into the courtyard, his eyes beginning to turn moist.

Housekeeper Hiri walked to Linley’s side, eyes red. “You grew up. You grew up. Young master Linley, you are taller than you were.” It had been seventeen full years since Housekeeper Hiri had seen Linley.

When he had left with Wharton, Linley had only been ten years old. “Grandpa Hiri, you look exactly the same.” The joy in Linley’s heart couldn’t be expressed with mere words.

Looking at Linley, Hillman said in an extremely gratified voice, “Young master Linley, you’ve grown up. But you still look very similar to how you looked ten years ago.” Ten years ago, Linley was already 1.7 meters tall. His appearance hadn’t changed much since then.

Suddenly, frantic footsteps could be heard. Turning his head, Linley saw a tall, strong figure appear in the doorway, as though appearing from a dream. This person looked very similar to Linley himself. Linley had the feeling that this person was most likely his younger brother, Wharton. Only, Wharton had left when he was just six years old. He had changed tremendously.

But Wharton only needed a moment before recognizing Linley. Linley still looked very much like he did in the past. Wharton’s mouth hung open. His tears were already beginning to flow down his face. “Big Bro...” Linley slowly walked towards Wharton, his gaze locked on him. “Big Bro...” Wharton staggered forward two steps as well.

“Little Wharton. Is it really you?” Linley stared at Wharton. That chubby-faced kid of the past had turned into a 2.2-meter-tall youngster.

“Big Bro, it’s me. It’s me.” At this moment, Wharton had completely forgotten about the issue with Nina. His heart was filled with boundless excitement. He was totally incapable of suppressing this excitement.

Linley reached out with trembling hands, resting them against Wharton’s shoulders. He carefully looked at Wharton. His face blossomed into smiles, even as tears were shining in his eyes. In a quivering voice, Linley said, “Little Wharton, you’ve grown up.”

That chubby-faced kid of his memories, who had always called out ‘big brother’, ‘big brother’ at him in a child-like voice, had already grown up.

“Big bro!” Wharton tightly embraced Linley in a massive hug. Having seen Wharton, Linley felt more excited than he had in a long time. Finally, he was no longer able to prevent his own tears from coming out, and they cascaded down his face.

## **Part III**

# **The Ten Thousand Kilometer Journey**

# For the rest of the Coiling Dragon Saga

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